Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

THE ART of WRITING

GRENVILLE KLEISER

CC-O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation,Chandigarh

The student of literary expression should familiarize himself with the best essays on English style. Foremost among these, and embodied in this book, are Spencer's "Philosophy of Style" and Lewes' "The Laws of Style." These should be read with discriminating care and studied until the principles set forth are thoroughly understood.

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Of equal importance to the literary craftsman is the subject of reading. Valuable practical suggestions will be found in Mathews' "Books and Reading" and Porter's "How to Read." Special attention is called to "The Purpose of the Writer" by De Mille.

The student can not too often be reminded that style must be learned with pen frequently in hand. The real secret lies in continuous and conscientious labour. A style that is clear, vigorous, graceful, flexible, and musical, comes not by impulse and intermittent striving, but through quiet, leisurely, intelligent, persistent practise.

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PREFACE

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THE ART OF WRITING

INTRODUCTION

THE ART OF WRITING, like the art of painting, may come naturally to some rare and fortunate persons, but in the vast majority of instances it is acquired by long and diligent study. The varieties of form and style of writing are practically unlimited, and every one must choose his own method, according to his temperament and natural inclination; yet the art of writing is governed by certain definite principles. As long as these are observed, the author is free to say more or less what he likes, provided it is worth saying, that it is sincere, and that his subject is likely to interest or entertain the reader.

But the aspirant to literary distinction is not expected to set about his task with a number of well-defined rules constantly running in his mind, as one might approach a purely mechanical operation; rather he should be thoroughly conversant beforehand with these established maxims or precepts, so that they will guide him unconsciously as he proceeds. There are principles which cover every aspect of literary production—

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the choice of individual words, their arrangement in the phrase, the marshaling of the component phrases into the complete sentence, the order of the sentences themselves, their length and general character. Dicta and dogmas on all these matters have been laid down from time to time, literally for centuries, by authorities eminent and obscure, but seldom have these contributions been brought together in convenient form for the student.

As Herbert Spencer says in an essay contained in this book: "No general theory of expression seems yet to have been enunciated. The maxims contained in works on composition and rhetoric are presented in an unorganized form. Standing as isolated dogmas, as empirical generalizations, they are neither so clearly apprehended, nor so much respected as they would be were they deduced from some simple first principle."

Great importance is attached by writers on style to the primary need for economy and simplicity of expression. Spencer and Lewes put these considerations in the front rank of requirements for a good stylist. This should give the student of authorship real encouragement. He must, he is told, consistently endeavor to be simple, clear and straightforward. How often do those who set out to learn to write think that they have to create something high-sounding, pompous, grand—"sublime," as they call it?

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A perusal of what the great writers of the past have to say on this subject will soon disillusion them, soon dispel the notion that they must be ever seeking portentous, polysyllabic words and impressive periods. This is not to say that polysyllabic words and long, weighty sentences are never desirable; they have their uses, but there is no need constantly to strive after them in the hope that they will carry a mysterious conviction, an inherent prestige. The shorter a word which a writer uses, the better for his sentence, provided—and this is of first importance—it is the most fitting one for his purpose. Simplicity has been rightly described as the best and truest ornament of most things in human life.

Tho in the largest field of modern literature, prose fiction, the public taste is subject to gradual change as the years progress and conditions of life alter, with the resultant evolution of the "modern novel," the great principles of writing remain unchanged. For our best models, we can still look back, as regards fiction, to such men as Dickens and Thackeray and Scott; in essays, we have still our finest examples in Emerson, Hazlitt, Addison and Steele, and the same applies to other forms of literature. In fact, the more the student of authorship pays attention to the great writers of the past, in preference to most of those of the modern school, the better will it be for his style, since there

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is often a tendency in the writings of to-day to introduce colloquialisms, new-coined and not always elegant expressions, which are largely absent from the statelier prose of a century or two ago. True it is that there are many modern writers who consistently strive to keep their work up to a high level of literary style, tho unfortunately they are too often left in the background when "popular writers" are being considered.

This raises the question of what value is attached by the general public to a sound knowledge of English as it should be spoken and written. There are those who hold that too much attention is paid to foreign and even dead languages at the expense of our mother tongue. It is regrettably true that once a young person is able to speak and write with tolerable facility, no further trouble is taken, in many cases, to cultivate in him a more refined appreciation of the English language, its traditions and possibilities.

This is largely attributable to the times in and conditions under which we live: to the hurry-scurry of business, of town-life, of transport; to the dominating attractions of sport, of amusement and of pleasure-seeking. A deplorably large number of professedly educated English people "really can not find time"—so they say—to sit down quietly and immerse themselves in the reading of serious literature, or the writing of

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anything, be it only a letter, in carefully-composed, effective English.

The methods by which one can acquire a good literary style have been well defined from time to time. In common with the pursuit of other skilled accomplishments, no "royal road" leads to there. Constant, unremitting practise in writing points the way. A perusal of the memoirs or of the biographies of any of the great English stylists will reveal the fact that they wrote and wrote unceasingly, and in the early stages of their development, throwing away reams of manuscript and having other more precious reams rejected by exacting publishers. They suffered innumerable reverses and many disappointments during their period of probation, constantly having the carefully-wrought products of their pens declined, being themselves sent empty-handed away to begin the struggle again. And begin again they did. The same disappointing experience is common to many of them. As all aspirants to literary distinction must be prepared to do, they took courage, believed in themselves and in their ultimate success. They studied the best models of style, wrote daily, week after week, revised and rerevised their copy, deleted a passage here, rewrote another there, recast this chapter or that one, and gradually evolved something that the publisher found worthy of print.

Unless the student of authorship be a born

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genius—a rare product indeed—he can get to the top only by a process more or less similar to that indicated, tho if he studies and practises along right lines he can smooth his own pathway. Above all, he must be a tireless and enthusiastic reader of the choicest books. In these he will find excellent models, will learn to appreciate the qualities most desirable in effective writing, will observe what to strive for and what to avoid. It is a fact that, even without direct personal instruction, the student of literature can unconsciously gradually assimilate a good style through familiarity with it as a reader. Many of the foremost writers have been assiduous readers, and most of them have acknowledged the debt they owed to the great authors who had gone before. A wise discrimination must naturally be used in the choice of books. Every variety of literary composition, however, should have due attention paid to it—essays, fiction, biography, travel, letters, the drama, and last, but by no means least in importance, poetry.

Of Washington Irving it is recorded that on leaving school he was sent to a lawyer's office, his father having resolved that he should follow the legal profession. But Irving found his greatest delight in his father's well-stocked library. "Without knowing or intending it, he was there preparing himself for his real calling in life. He ranged at will over the wide field of English literature,"

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(his biographer says), "from Chaucer and Spenser to Addison and Goldsmith."

Books should be read critically. The student of fiction should observe in his reading of novels how the plot is developed, how every incident and piece of dialog is directed to the gradual unfolding of the theme, or to the revelation of character. He should mark at what period in the book the author reveals the secret of the plot, how he achieves this, what the effect is on himself as a reader, how the writer proceeds to the conclusion, and how this is rounded off. By carefully comparing the works of different writers, observing, for instance, what proportion of their pages is devoted to dialog and what to descriptive matter, the student will be able to determine for himself the style he favors most. Apart from the "technical" lessons which he may derive from his reading, he will also enlarge his vocabulary, increase his knowledge of the world and the people who inhabit it.

In reading essays, the student should note in what way this form of literary production differs from the longer and more elaborate treatise on a similar subject. He should observe to what depth the essayist carries his investigation, how he seeks to deal with a vast subject in a limited space, yet avoids giving the impression that he is attempting to deal with it exhaustively.

Biographies form another interesting field

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of study for the assiduous reader. What facts are important in a man's life? Is this or that enterprise worth recording? Would it be wise to reproduce this letter, or to report that conversation? Whole volumes deal with these and kindred subjects for the benefit of the would-be biographer. If you want to become a good stylist, include this form of writing in your general reading.

A practical course to pursue to determine whether your composition "sounds well" is to read it aloud, either to yourself or to a discriminating friend. What may look passable and satisfactory on paper may not sound harmonious or effective when expressed audibly. This applies especially to dialog, for, as this is supposed to represent the conversation of actual persons it should strike the ear naturally and not stiltedly coming from the reader's lips.

Style is largely a reflection of the man himself. One can not give the impression of sincerity if one is not sincere, nor can any one convince who is not first thoroughly convinced himself. As Goethe says: "The style of a writer is a faithful representative of his mind; therefore, if any man wish to write a clear style, let him first be clear in his thoughts; and if he would write in a noble style, let him first possess a noble soul."

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says—"By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backward? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I can not think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin—and indeed what he himself acknowledges is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens' idea—but the author of "Caleb Williams" was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

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There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialog, or autorial comment, whatever crevices of fact or action may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects or impressions of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel first, and secondly, a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone—whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterwards looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of events or tone as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—that is to say, who could —detail, step by step, the processes by which

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any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say—but perhaps the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully-matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations,—in a word, at the wheels and pinions, the tackle for scene-shifting, the step-ladders and demon-traps, the cock's feathers, the red paint, and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrio*.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy

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with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progessive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum*, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analyzed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi* by which some one of my own works was put together. I select "The Raven" as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referrible either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se*, the circumstance—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing *a* poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *ceteris paribus*, no poet can afford to dispense with *any-*

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thing that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one-half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, *inevitably*, with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that, altho in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe" (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation—again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ration of the intensity of

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the intended effect—this, with one proviso—that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that in-

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tense and pure elevation of *soul—not* of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating "the beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, altho attainable to a certain extent in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from anything here said that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

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Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points*, in the theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone—both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect, by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while

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I continually varied that of thought; that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation *of the application* of the *refrain*—the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain*. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the refrain itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence would of course be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain*.

The question now arose as to the *character* of the word. Having made up my mind to a *refrain*, the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary, the *refrain* forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would

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have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact, it was the very first which presented itself.

The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "Nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the preassumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a *human* being—I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non*-reasoning creature capable of speech; and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone.

I have now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill-omen, monotonously repeating the one word "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness* or perfection at all points, I asked myself—"Of all melancholy topics what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" Death, was the obvious reply. "And

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when," I said, "is this the most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length, the answer here also is obvious—"When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore." I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the *application* of the word repeated, but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending, that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application*. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"—that I could make this first query a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less, and so on, until at length the lover, startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself, by its frequent repetition, and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it, is at length excited to superstition, and wildly pro-

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pounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the *expected* "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me, or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction, I first established in mind the climax or concluding query—that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer—that query in reply to which the word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning, at the end where all works of art should begin; for it was here at this point of my preconsiderations that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:—

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!
By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

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Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.''
Quoth the Raven, ''Nevermore.''

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness, and importance the preceding queries of the lover, and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the meter, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza, as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas, I should without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm,* it is still clear that the possible varieties of meter and stanza are absolutely infinite; and yet, for *centuries, no man, in verse has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing.* The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately

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sought and, altho a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or meter of the "Raven." The former is trochaic—the latter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the *refrain* of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically, the feet employed throughout (trochees) consists of a long syllable followed by a short; the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet, the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds), the third of eight, the fourth of seven and a half, the fifth the same, the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines taken individually has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their *combinations into stanzas;* nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rime and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale*. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space* is absolutely

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necessary to the effect of insulated incident—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage—it being under-

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stood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird—the bust of *Pallas* being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and, secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with many a flirt and flutter."

Not the *least obeisance made he*—not a moment stopped or stayed he,
But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:—

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the *grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,*
"Tho thy *crest be shorn and shaven,* thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the night's Plutonian shore?"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marveled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse so plainly,
Tho its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;

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For we can not help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

The effect of the *dénouement* being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness—this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees anything even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanor. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a proper frame for the *dénouement*—which is now brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *dénouement* proper—with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world—the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be

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said to have its completion. So far, everything is within the limits of the accountable —of the real. A raven having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams—the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in pouring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who, amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanor, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The Raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"—a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow through the anticipated answer "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first

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or obvious phrase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no over-stepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and secondly, some amount of suggestiveness, some undercurrent, however indefinite of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with *the ideal.* It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The undercurrent of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines—

"Take thy beak from out *my heart,* and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore!"

It will be observed that the words, "from

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out my heart,'' involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, ''Nevermore,'' dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen:

> And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
> On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
> And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
> And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
> And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on the floor
> Shall be lifted—nevermore!

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HOW TO READ

BY NOAH PORTER

A BOOK is the creation of a living man, and should be regarded and judged somewhat as a man himself is tried and estimated. A few books are indeed almost impersonal, and might have been written by one man as readily as by another. These are to be judged chiefly by their *value*, *i.e.*, by what they contain. But most books express more or less of the personality of their authors; and in reading them, we come in contact with living men. Good books, besides the value of what they contain and import, have a *positive* worth in their effect on the principles, feelings and character.

If this is true, then in reading we are properly said to come into communication with a human being, who will either instruct and elevate, or mislead and degrade us. From these fundamental conceptions of *Books* and *Reading*, we have begun to derive our rules for the selection of the books which we read, and for our own behavior in using them. We have also seen that, for success in reading, we must read with attention, and to read with attention, we must read with an awakened and sustained interest. Tho this interest when awakened must be regulated by

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the rules of prudence and duty, yet it often needs to be enkindled and sustained, if we are to read with attention and profit. It becomes then a question of prime concern how we can so arouse, sustain, and direct our interest in the books which we read as to make our reading most effective for good. In answer to this somewhat comprehensive inquiry, we reply:

1. If we are at a loss what to read, or if we can think of nothing which we desire especially to read, it is well to ask ourselves what we care most to learn or to think of. No questions are more frequently pressed than these: "What shall I read? What shall I read next? With what books shall I begin a course of reading? What do you think will interest me?" Sometimes a person asks these questions of himself. More frequently he addresses them to another. The best answers which can be given to them are suggested by other questions like these: "What are you most interested to know? In what particulars does your ignorance most disturb or annoy you? With what class of facts and thoughts, principles or emotions would it please you best to be conversant?" If a person can answer these questions with any satisfaction to himself, he is in the way of knowing what books he ought to read first. For if he can not without assistance find the book which he ought first to lay hold of, he can be more easily directed by another, when his

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adviser knows what he cares most to know or what excites his keenest appetite.

The great difficulty with the majority of readers is, that their sense is, of any wants which books can supply, indefinite, or their desire to supply these wants is feeble. Or, if they are aware of their deficiences in general, they have neither the courage nor the patience to know them in the detail, and manfully to set about the work of removing them. To many persons the wants which books alone can supply are themselves either created or brought to light by the use of books. Many a man needs first to read and to read with interest, in order to have awakened in his soul a thirst for books and a taste for reading. There are however not a few who through a sense of ignorance, or shame when brought in contact with those better read than themselves, or through some other lucky tho perhaps rude shock to their self-conceit and self-content, are suddenly fired with a desire for knowledge from books. Of history they begin to have some inkling, and feel the first desire to learn the story of their own township, their own family, their own nation or their own race. Of eloquence they have some idea, and they seek to be excited by written oratory. Poetry may have moved their ears with its rhythmic melody or charmed their souls with its wizard imagery. The drama or the novel may have startled and enchanted them by its pictured

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pages. Or perhaps the person who asks, "What shall I read?" or "With what shall I begin?" may have read and studied for years in a mechanical routine, and with a listless spirit; with scarcely an independent thought, with no plans of self-improvement, and few aspirations for self-culture. To all these classes the advice is full of meaning: "Read what will satisfy your wants and appease your desires, and you will comply with the first condition to reading with interest and profit." Hunger and thirst are better than manifold appliances and directions, in respect to other than the bodily wants, towards a good appetite and a healthy digestion. If a man has any self-knowledge or any power of self-direction, he is surely competent to ask himself, what is the subject or subjects, in respect to which he stands most in need of knowledge or excitement from books. If he can answer this question he has gone very far towards answering the question, "What book or books can I read with satisfaction and profit?"

2. It follows by a necessary inference that every man should aim first of all to read and master all the books which relate directly or indirectly to his profession or business in life. If a man is alive to any subject whatever, it is to his chosen occupation in life, and to whatever promises its easier working or more successful issue. If he dislikes his business, if he frets at and fights it,

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then God only can help him. On such a man human counsel and human aid must be thrown away; much more must books and reading, if they can not bring him to acquiesce in his business or to change it. But if a man has something to do day by day in which he strives after the skill which leads to success, and if he can learn anything about it from books, he can not but read such books as will instruct him, with an excited and prolonged interest. No novelist is held to the charmed page of fiction, no rhapsodist reads and rereads his favorite poet, with the keen and excited attention with which a man thoroughly aroused by some difficulty in his occupation or his circumstances, resorts to the treatise or the encyclopedia, the journal or the magazine, which promises to answer the question which he is anxiously pondering. Let a farmer have brooded over the unaccountable loss of his wheat or potato crop, or have anxiously inquired what will restore the blight which is beginning to attack his favorite peach- or pear-tree, and he devours the printed pages that prescribe a remedy or promise relief. If a mechanic is at fault in his work, and finds his machinery fails to do the service for which it is designed, he feels no lack of interest and suffers under no failure of attention while he is consulting the books which promise to instruct him. Let either learn that by extensive reading he can gain an insight into the secret of

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certain and progressive success, and he will read widely in relation to his business with an ever-increasing and intensified enthusiasm. The madness of the so-called book-farmers and inventive enthusiasts, illustrates the truth which we assert, that if a man would learn to read with interest and attention, he should first of all read much in respect to his calling in life. If he is a farmer, he should read books of agriculture; if a machanic, books on machinery; if a banker, books on banking and finance; whatever be his calling, he should make it the one subject upon which he will read, if he reads upon nothing else. In this way he will elevate his calling, from being a slavish and enslaving drudgery, into a rational discipline, not only for immediate profit but for manly cultivation. He will not only feed and cherish his body, and enlarge his comforts and luxuries by his better instructed toil, but he will discipline his intellect and elevate his soul by the thinking and reasoning which his reading will require. He will waken into life that within himself which is higher than his occupation or profession, and that is his thinking and feeling self. He will find himself that which is more than the farmer, the trader, or the mechanic, and that is the manhood that he has and which he is bound to think of and care for. The wants and desires, the hopes and the aspirations which pertain to the man will be gradually awak-

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ened, and will connect him with the thoughts and feelings of other men as these are expressed in books, till it may be that books shall become one of the necessaries of his life, and reading, instead of being a listless and constrained employment, shall be his chosen occupation, his best society, his most delightful amusement, and perhaps his sweetest solace and comfort in dark and bitter hours.

3. In reading, we do well to propose to ourselves definite ends and purposes. The more distinctly we are aware of our own wants and desires in reading, the more definite and permanent will be our acquisitions. Hence it is a good rule to ask ourselves frequently, "Why am I reading this book, essay or poem; or why am I reading it at the present time rather than any other?" It may often be a satisfying answer, that it is convenient; that the book happens to be at hand; or that we read to pass away the time. Such reasons are often very good, but they ought not always to satisfy us. Yet the very habit of proposing these questions, however they may be answered, will involve the calling of ourselves to account for our reading, and the consideration of it in the light of wisdom and duty. The distinct consciousness of some object at present before us, imparts a manifold greater interest to the contents of any volume. It imparts to the reader an appropriative power, a force of affinity, by

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which he insensibly and unconsciously attracts to himself all that has a near or even a remote relation to the end for which he reads. Any one is conscious of this who reads a story with the purpose of repeating it to an absent friend; or an essay or a report with the design of reviving its imagery, and reciting its finest passages. Indeed one never learns to read effectively until he learns to read in such a spirit—not always indeed for a definite end, yet always with a mind attent to appropriate and retain and turn to the uses of culture, if not to a more direct application. The private history of every self-educated man from Franklin onwards attests that they all were uniformly not only earnest but *select* in their reading, and that they selected their books with distinct reference to the purposes for which they used them. Indeed the reason why self-trained men so often surpass men who are trained by others in the effectiveness and success of their reading, is that they know for what they read and study, and have definite aims and wishes in all their dealings with books. The omnivorous and indiscriminate reader who is at the same time a listless and passive reader, however ardent is his curiosity, can never be a reader of the most effective sort.

4. Another good rule is suggested by the foregoing. Always have some solid reading in hand, *i.e.* some work or author which we

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carry forward from one day to another, or one hour of leisure to the next, with persistence till we have finished whatever we have undertaken. There are many great and successful readers who do not observe this rule, but it is a good rule notwithstanding. The writer once called upon one of the most extensive and persevering of modern travelers at an early hour of the day to attend him upon a walk to a distant village. It was after breakfast, and tho he had but few minutes at command he was sitting with book in hand—a book of history, which he was perusing day after day. He remarked: "This has been my habit for years in all my wanderings. It is the one habit which gives solidity to my intellectual activities and imparts tone to my life. It is only in this way that I can overcome and counteract the tendency to the dissipation of my powers and the distraction of my attention, as strange persons and strange scenes present themselves from day to day." To the rule already given —read with a definite aim—we could add the rule—make your aims to be definite by continuously holding them rigidly to a single book at all times, except when relaxation requires you to cease to work and to live for amusement and play. Always have at least one iron in the fire, and kindle the fire at least once every day.

5. It is implied in the preceding, that we should read upon definite subjects, and with

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a certain method and proportion in the choice of our books. If we have a single object to accomplish in our reading for the present, that object will of necessity direct the choice of what we read, and we shall arrange our reading with reference to this single end. This will be a nucleus around which our reading will for the moment naturally gather and arrange itself. If several subjects seem to us equally important and interesting, we should dispose of them in order, and give to each for the time our chief and perhaps our exclusive attention. That this is wise is so obvious as not to require illustration. "One thing at a time," is an accepted condition for all efficient activity, whether it is employed upon things or thoughts, upon men or books. If five or ten separate topics have equal claim upon our interest and attention, we shall do to each the amplest justice, if we make each in its turn the central subject of our reading. There is little danger of weariness or monotony from the workings of such a rule. Most single topics admit or require a considerable variety of books, each different from the other and each supplementing the other. Hence, it is one of the best of practises in prosecuting a course of reading, to read every author who can cast any light upon the subject which we have in hand. For example if we are reading the history of the Great Rebellion in England, we should read if we can, not a single author

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only, as Clarendon, but a half-dozen or a half-score, each of whom writes from his own point of view, supplies what another omits, or corrects what he under or over-states. But, besides the formal histories of the period, there are the various novels, the scenes and characters of which are placed in those times, such as Scott's "Woodstock"; there are also diaries, such as those by Evelyn, Pepys and Burton; and there are memoirs, such as those of Col. Hutchinson, while memoirs and diaries are imitated in scores of fictions. There are poems, such as those of Andrew Marvel, Milton, and Dryden. There are also shoals of political tracts and pamphlets, of hand-bills and caricatures. We name these various descriptions of works and classes of reading, not because we suppose all of them are accessible to those readers who live at a distance from large public libraries, or because we would advise every one who may have access to such libraries, to read all these books and classes of books as a matter of course, but because we would illustrate how great is the variety of books and reading matter that are grouped around a single topic and are embraced within a single period. Every person must judge for himself how long a time he can bestow upon any single subject, or how many and various are the books in respect to it which it is wise to read; but of this every one may be assured, that it is far easier, far more agree-

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able, and far more economical of time and energy, to concentrate the attention upon a single subject at a time than to extend it to half a score, and that six books read in succession, or together upon a single topic, are far more interesting and profitable than twice as many which treat of topics remotely related. A lady well known to the writer, of the least possible scholarly pretensions or literary notoriety, spent fifteen months of leisure snatched by fragments from onerous family cares and brilliant social engagements, in reading the history of Greece as written by a great variety of authors and as illustrated by many accessories of literature and art. Nor should it be argued that such rules as these or the habits which they enjoin are suitable for scholars only or for people who have much leisure for reading. It should rather be urged, that those who can read the fewest books and who have at command the scantiest time, should aim to read with the greatest concentration and method; should occupy all of their divided energy with single centers of interest, and husband the few hours which they can command, in reading whatever converges to a definite because to a single impression.

6. Special efforts should be made to *retain* what is gathered from reading, if any such efforts are required. Some persons read with an interest so wakeful and reponsive, and an attention so fixed and energetic, as to need no

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appliances and no efforts in order to retain what they read. They look upon a page and it is imprinted upon the memory. They follow the thoughts and trace the words and understand the sentences of their author and these remain with them as permanent possessions. Images, descriptions, eloquent passages, well-sounding and rhythmic lines in poetry or prose, can all be spontaneously and accurately reproduced; or if words and illustrations are forgotten and lost, principles, truths and impressions will remain and can not be effaced. Every book which such persons read enters into the structure of their being—it is taken up and assimilated into the very substance of their living selves. Every paragraph in a newspaper with every fact which it records or truth which it illustrates, is turned to some permanent account and remains as a lasting acquisition.

But there are others who read only to lose and to forget. Facts and truths, words and thoughts are alike evanescent. We shall not attempt to explain here the nature of these differences. We are concerned only to devise the remedy: we insist that those who labor under these difficulties should use special appliances to avoid or overcome them. But that upon which we insist most of all, is that what we read we should seek to make our own, *only in the manner and after the measure of which we are capable.* Each reader should follow the natural bent and

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aptitudes of his own individual nature. If we have not a good verbal memory, it is almost in vain that we seek to remember choice phrases and sentences, happy turns of expression, admirable bits of eloquent speech, or striking stanzas and lines of inspiring or moving poetry. We may read them again and again, we may admire them with increasing fervor, we may return to them with an ever-augmented interest, but we shall make little progress in remembering them so as to be able to recite them. If we have a feeble capacity for the retention of dates and facts as such, unless they interest our feelings or illustrate principles, the utmost painstaking will do little to help us to retain facts when isolated or uninteresting, or numbers when they signify nothing but so many figures. We do not advise a man laboring under these inaptitudes to fight against nature or to fall into a querulous, discouraged or fretful quarrel with himself, because, as he says, he can not remember what he reads. Nor when we enjoin upon him to use special efforts to remember, do we intend that he shall be more interested *in his efforts to remember* than he is interested *in what he is to remember*. We advise just the opposite. But we contend that when a man reads he should put himself into the most intimate intercourse with his author, so that all his energies of apprehension, judgment and feeling may be occupied with and aroused by what his author

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furnishes, whatever it may be. If repetition or review will aid him in this, as it often will, let him not disdain or neglect frequent reviews. If the use of the pen in brief or full notes, in catch-words or other symbols will aid him, let him not shrink from the drudgery of the pen and the commonplace-book. If he is aided to discern and retain the logical connections of an argument or a discourse by drawing them out in a complete skeleton or analysis, let him prosecute the dissection without flinching. If a resurvey of the parts will give him a comprehensive view of the method of the whole let him complete his analyses with the utmost care and arrange their products in a new and symmetrical order. But there is no charm or efficacy in such mechanism by itself. It is only valuable as a means to an end, and that end is to quicken the intellectual energies by arousing and holding the attention. It is by awakening and energizing the reason—by concentrating and arousing the feelings that it can serve any very useful purpose. To remember what we read we must make it our own: we must think with the author, rethinking his thoughts, following his fact, assenting to or rejecting his reasonings, and entering into the very spirit of his emotions and purposes.

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THE TASKS OF THE MODERN HISTORIAN*

BY A. J. MACAULAY

The best historians of later times have been seduced from truth, not by their imagination, but by their reason. They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But, unhappily, they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at the theory from looking at some of the phenomena, and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory. For this purpose it is not necessary that they should assert what is absolutely false, for all questions in morals and politics are questions of comparison and degree. Any proposition which does not involve a contradiction in term may, by possibility, be true; and if all the circumstances which raise a probability in its favor be stated and enforced, and those which lead to an opposite conclusion be omitted or lightly passed over, it may appear to be demonstrated. In every human character and transaction there is a mixture of good and evil;—a little ex-

*From the essay on History, *Edinburgh Review*, May, 1828.

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aggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of epithets, a watchful and searching skepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report of tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud, or a tyrant of Henry the Fourth.

This species of misrepresentation abounds in the most valuable works of modern historians. Herodotus tells his story like a slovenly witness, who, heated by partialities and prejudices, unacquainted with the established rules of evidence, and uninstructed as to the obligations of his oath, confounds what he imagines with what he has seen and heard, and brings out facts, reports, conjectures, and fancies in one mass. Hume is an accomplished advocate. Without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavorable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given. Everything that is offered on the other side is scrutinized with the utmost severity; every suspicious circumstance is a ground for comment and invective; what can not be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice; concessions even are some-

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times made; but this insidious candor only increases the effect of the vast mass of sophistry.

We have mentioned Hume as the ablest and most popular writer of his class; but the charge which we have brought against him is one to which all our most distinguished historians are in some degree obnoxious. Gibbon, in particular, deserves very severe censure. Of all the numerous culprits, however, none is more deeply guilty than Mr. Mitford. We willingly acknowledge the obligations which are due to his talents and industry. The modern historians of Greece had been in the habit of writing as if the world had learned nothing new during the last sixteen hundred years. Instead of illustrating the events which they narrated, by the philosophy of a more enlightened age, they judged of antiquity by itself alone. They seemed to think that nations, long driven from every other corner of literature, had a prescriptive right to occupy this last fastness. They considered all the ancient historians as equally authentic. They scarcely made any distinction between him who related events at which he had himself been present, and him who, five hundred years after, composed a philosophical romance for a society which had, in the interval, undergone a complete change. It was all Greek, and all true! The centuries which separated Plutarch from Thucydides seemed as nothing to men who

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lived in an age so remote. The distance of time produced an error similar to that which is sometimes produced by distance of place. There are many good ladies who think that all the people in India live together, and who charge a friend setting out for Calcutta with kind messages to Bombay. To Rollin and Barthelemi, in the same manner, all the classics were contemporaries.

Mr. Mitford certainly introduced great improvements; he showed us that men who wrote in Greek and Latin sometimes told lies; he showed us that ancient history might be related in such a manner as to furnish not only allusions to schoolboys, but important lessons to statesmen. From that love of theatrical effect and high-flown sentiment which has poisoned almost every other work on the same subject, his book is perfectly free. But his passion for a theory as false, and far more ungenerous, led him substantially to violate truth in every page. Sentiments unfavorable to democracy are made with unhesitating confidence, and with the utmost bitterness of language. Every charge brought against a monarch, or an aristocracy, is sifted with the utmost care. If it can not be denied, some palliating supposition is suggested, or we are at least reminded that some circumstance now unknown *may* have justified what at present appears unjustifiable. Two events are reported by the same author in the same sentence; their truth rests on

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the same testimony; but the one supports the daring hypothesis, and the other seems inconsistent with it. The one is taken and the other is left.

The practise of distorting narrative into a conformity with theory, is a vice not so unfavorable as at first sight it may appear, to the interest of political science. We have compared the writers who indulge in it to advocates; and we may add, that their conflicting fallacies, like those of advocates, correct each other. It has always been held, in the most enlightened nations, that a tribunal will decide a judicial question most fairly, when it has heard two able men argue, as unfairly as possible, on the two opposite sides of it; and we are inclined to think that this opinion is just. Sometimes, it is true, superior eloquence and dexterity will make the worse appear the better reason; but it is at least certain that the judge will be compelled to contemplate the case under two different aspects. It is certain that no important consideration will altogether escape notice.

This is, at present, the state of history. The poet laureate appears for the Church of England, Lingard for the Church of Rome. Brodie has moved to set aside the verdicts obtained by Hume; and the cause in which Mitford succeeded is, we understand, about to be reheard. In the midst of these disputes, however, history proper, if we may

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use the term, is disappearing. The high, grave, impartial summing up of Thucydides is nowhere to be found.

While our historians are practising all the arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections and presenting pictures to the imagination. That a writer may produce these effects without violating truth, is sufficiently proved by many excellent biographical works. The immense popularity which well-written books of this kind have acquired, deserves the serious consideration of historians. Voltaire's Charles the Twelfth, Marmontel's Memoirs, Boswell's Life of Johnson, Southey's Account of Nelson, are perused with delight by the most frivolous and indolent. Whenever any tolerable book of the same description makes its appearance, the circulating libraries are mobbed; the book societies are in commotion; the new novel lies uncut; the magazines and newspapers fill their columns with extracts. In the meantime, histories of great empires, written by men of eminent ability, lie unread on the shelves of ostentatious libraries.

The writers of history seem to entertain an aristocratical contempt for the writers of memoirs. They think it beneath the dignity of men who describe the revolutions of nations to dwell on the details which constitute the charm of biography. They have imposed on themselves a code of conventional decen-

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cies as absurd as that which has been the bane of the French drama. The most characteristic and interesting circumstances are omitted or softened down, because, as we are told, they are too trivial for the majesty of history. The majesty of history seems to resemble the majesty of the poor King of Spain, who died a martyr to ceremony, because the proper dignitaries were not at hand to render him assistance.

That history would be more amusing if this etiquette were relaxed, will, we suppose, be acknowledged. But would it be less dignified or useful? What do we mean, when we say that one past event is important, and another insignificant? No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future. A history which does not serve this purpose, tho it may be filled with battles, treaties, and commotions, is as useless as the series of turnpike-tickets collected by Sir Matthew Mite.

Let us suppose that Lord Clarendon, instead of filling hundreds of folio pages with copies of state-papers, in which the same assertions and contradictions are repeated, till the reader is overpowered with weariness, had condescended to be the Boswell of the Long Parliament. Let us suppose that he had exhibited to us the wise and lofty self-government of Hampden, leading while he seemed to follow, and propounding unanswerable ar-

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guments in the strongest forms, with the modest air of an inquirer anxious for information; the delusions which misled the noble spirit of Vane; the coarse fanaticism which concealed the yet loftier genius of Cromwell, destined to control a mutinous army and a factious people, to abase the flag of Holland, to arrest the victorious arms of Sweden, and to hold the balance firm between the rival monarchies of France and Spain. Let us suppose that he had made his Cavaliers and Roundheads talk in their own style; that he had reported some of the ribaldry of Rupert's pages, and some of the cant of Harrison and Fleetwood, would not his work, in that case, have been more interesting? Would it not have been more accurate?

A history in which every particular incident may be true, may on the whole be false. The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper

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current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the undercurrent flows. We read of defeats and victories. But we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories, and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers, and of the rise of profligate favorites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil affected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system.

Bishop Watson compares a geologist to a gnat mounted on an elephant, and laying down theories as to the whole internal structure of the vast animal, from the phenomena of the hide. The comparison is unjust to the geologists; but it is very applicable to those historians who write as if the body politic were homogeneous, who look only on the surface of affairs, and never think of the mighty and various organization which lies deep below.

In the works of such writers as these, England, at the close of the Seven Years' War, is in the highest state of prosperity. At the close of the American War, she is in a miserable and degraded condition; as if the people were not on the whole as rich, as well governed, and as well educated at the latter period as at the former. We have read books called Histories of England, under the reign of George the Second in which the rise of Methodism is not even mentioned. A hun-

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dred years hence, this breed of authors will, we hope, be extinct. If it should still exist, the late ministerial interregnum will be described in terms which will seem to imply that all government was at an end; that the social contract was annulled, and that the hand of every man was against his neighbor, until the wisdom and virtue of the new cabinet educed order out of the chaos of anarchy. We are quite certain that misconceptions as gross prevail at this moment, respecting many important parts of our annals.

The effect of historical reading is analogous, in many respects, to that produced by foreign travel. The student, like the tourist, is transported into a new state of society. He sees new fashions. He hears new modes of expression. His mind is enlarged by contemplating the wide diversities of laws, of morals, or of manners. But men may travel far, and return with minds as contracted as if they had never stirred from their own market-town. In the same manner, man may know the dates of many battles, and the genealogies of many royal houses, and yet be no wiser. Most people look at past times as princes look at foreign countries. More than one illustrious stranger has landed on our island amidst the shouts of a mob, has dined with the king, has hunted with the master of the stag-hounds, has seen the guards review, and a knight of the garter installed; has cantered along Regent street; has visited

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St. Paul's, and noted down its dimensions, and has then departed, thinking that he has seen England. He has, in fact, seen a few public buildings, public men, and public ceremonies. But of the vast and complex system of society, of the fine shades of national character, of the practical operation of government and laws, he knows nothing. He who would understand these things rightly, must not confine his observations to palaces and solemn days. He must see ordinary men as they appear in their ordinary business, and in their ordinary pleasures. He must mingle in the crowds of the exchange and the coffee-house. He must obtain admittance to the convivial table and the domestic hearth. He must bear with vulgar expressions. He must not shrink from exploring even the retreats of misery. He who wishes to understand the condition of mankind in former ages, must proceed on the same principle. If he attends only to public transactions, to wars, congresses, and debates, his duties will be as unprofitable as the travels of those imperial, royal, and serene sovereigns, who form their judgment of our island from having gone in state to a few fine sights, and from having held formal conferences with a few great officers.

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his character, which

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is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed; some transactions are prominent, others retire. But the scale on which he represents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man. He shows us the court, the camp, and the senate. But he shows us also the nation. He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice, which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line.

If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made

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by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works, which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government and the history of the people would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in "Old Mortality"; for one half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in the "Fortunes of Nigel."

The early part of our imaginary history would be rich with coloring from romance, ballad, and chronicle. We should find ourselves in the company of knights such as those of Froissart, and of pilgrims such as those who rode with Chaucer from the Tabard. Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest—from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw; from the

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throne of the legate to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders—the stately monastery, with the good cheer in its refectory, and the high-mass in its chapel—the manor-house, with its hunting and hawking—the tournament, with the heralds and ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold—would give truth and life to the representation. We should perceive, in a thousand slight touches, the importance of the privileged burgher, and the fierce and haughty spirit which swelled under the collar of the degraded villain. The revival of letters would not merely be described in few magnificent periods. We should discern, in innumerable particulars, the fermentation of mind, the eager appetite for knowledge, which distinguished the sixteenth from the fifteenth century. In the Reformation we should see, not merely a schism which changed the ecclesiastical constitution of England and the mutual relations of the European powers, but a moral war which raged in every family, which set the father against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. Henry would be painted with the skill of Tacitus. We should have the change of his character from his profuse and joyous youth to his savage and imperious old age. We should perceive the gradual progress of selfish and tyrannical passions, in a mind

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not naturally insensible or ungenerous; and to the last we should detect some remains of that open and noble temper which endeared him to a people whom he oppressed, struggling with the hardness of despotism and the irritability of disease. We should see Elizabeth in all her weakness, and in all her strength, surrounded by the handsome favorites whom she never trusted, and the wise old statesmen whom she never dismissed, uniting in herself the most contradictory qualities of both her parents—the coquetry, the caprice, the petty malice of Anne—the haughty and resolute spirit of Henry. We have no hesitation in saying, that a great artist might produce a portrait of this remarkable woman, at least as striking as that in the novel of Kenilworth, without employing a single trait not authenticated by ample testimony. In the meantime, we should see arts cultivated, wealth accumulated, the conveniences of life improved. We should see the keeps, where nobles, insecure themselves, spread insecurity around them, gradually giving place to the halls of peaceful opulence, to the oriels of Longleat, and the stately pinnacles of Burleigh. We should see towns extended, deserts cultivated, the hamlets of fishermen turned into wealthy havens, the meal of the peasant improved, and his hut more commodiously furnished. We should see those opinions and feelings which produced the great struggle against the house

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of Stuart, slowly growing up in the bosom of private families, before they manifested themselves in parliamentary debates. Then would come the civil war. Those skirmishes, on which Clarendon dwells so minutely, would be told, as Thucydides would have told them, with perspicuous conciseness. They are merely connecting links. But the great characteristics of the age, the loyal enthusiasm of the brave English gentry, the fierce licentiousness of the swearing, dicing, drunken reprobates, whose excesses disgraced the royal cause—the austerity of the Presbyterian Sabbaths in the city, the extravagance of the Independent preachers in the camp, the precise garb, the severe countenance, the petty scruples, the affected accents, the absurd names and phrases which marked the Puritans—the valor, the policy, the public spirit which lurked beneath these ungraceful disguises—the dreams of the raving Fifth-monarch-man—the dreams, scarcely less wild, of the philosophic republican—all these would enter into the representation, and render it at once more exact and more striking.

The instruction derived from history thus written would be of a vivid and practical character. It would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would be not merely traced on the mind, but branded into it. Many truths, too, would be learned, which can be learned, in no other manner.

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As the history of states is generally written, the greatest and most momentous revolutions seem to come upon them like supernatural inflictions, without warning or cause. But the fact is, that such revolutions are almost always the consequence of moral changes, which have gradually passed on the mass of the community, and which ordinarily proceed far before their progress is indicated by any public measure. An intimate knowledge of the domestic history of nations is therefore absolutely necessary to the prognosis of political events. A narrative defective in this respect is as useless as a medical treatise which should pass by all the symptoms attendant on the early stage of a disease, and mention only what occurs when the patient is beyond the reach of remedies.

An historian, such as we have been attempting to describe, would indeed be an intellectual prodigy. In his mind, powers, scarcely compatible with each other, must be tempered into an exquisite harmony. We shall sooner see another Shakspeare or another Homer. The highest excellence to which any single faculty can be brought would be less surprizing than such a happy and delicate combination of qualities. Yet the contemplation of imaginary models is not an unpleasant or useless employment of the mind. It can not indeed produce perfection, but it produces improvement, and

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nourishes that generous and liberal fastidiousness, which is not inconsistent with the strongest sensibility to merit, and which, while it exalts our conceptions of the art, does not render us unjust to the artist.

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THE PURPOSE OF THE WRITER

BY JAMES DE MILLE

INVENTION, being the selection and accumulation of subject-matter, is also concerned with the purpose of the writer. Every kind of composition has some aim or purpose, and these are numerous, but may be reduced to a few classes. First, the aim of the writer may be to instruct; secondly, to convince; thirdly, to persuade; and, fourthly, to please.

The Aim to Instruct.—1. The aim of the writer may be to instruct. This presupposes more or less ignorance of the subject on the part of the reader.

Under this class may be included all works in which any kind of information is conveyed. These comprehend a large proportion of narrative and descriptive writing, such as histories, biographies, and books of travel. Prose fiction also will frequently show the aim to instruct; more particulary the historical novel, of which "Quentin Durward" may be taken as an example. The tales of Louisa Mühlbach afford perhaps a better instance, for in these the information which the author intends to convey quite overshadows those minor details upon which other writers of fiction are wont to enlarge.

Expository writings often have this for a

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prominent aim, for instruction is largely communicated in this way, altho their chief purpose is most frequently to convince or persuade. Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" and Bacon's "Advancement of Learning" are conspicuous examples, for altho the polemical spirit is visible, yet the purpose of instruction is certainly in the ascendant. To those may be added that vast body of scientific literature, whether didactic, moral, or religious, where the aim is to enlarge the sum of human knowledge.

Poetry often exhibits the same purpose, as, for example, Virgil's "Georgics"; Horace's "Ars Poetica"; Pope's "Essay on Criticism."

The Aim to Convince.—2. The aim may be to convince. Here the writer presupposes in the reader not ignorance, but a difference of opinion; and his aim is to effect a change in that opinion towards his own point of view.

This is chiefly confined to expository writings. It may be seen in philosophical works, such as those of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Reid, and others; while in theological works it is equally prevalent, especially in those of a polemical character. It is sometimes found in oratory, which is almost always designed either to convince or persuade, altho the latter purpose is more frequent than the former.

This purpose—to convince—may be found in departments of literature where it is least expected. It might be shown that the aim

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of such a work as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is to display the evils of American slavery, and thus by means of highly colored facts to convince the reader of the necessity of the overthrow of that institution.

It may also be observed in that large class of works of fiction known as religious novels, which are a characteristic of the present day, of which a well-known example is the Schönberg-Cotta Family. In all of these, the effort of the author to convince the reader of the truth of his own views is as evident as that of the writer who puts forth his opinions in expository works.

The Aim to Persuade.—3. The aim may be to persuade. Here, as in the previous case, the writer seeks to bring over the reader to his own point of view. He does not, however, presuppose any difference of opinion, but may regard the reader as ignorant or indifferent; or he may even conceive of him as already on his own side, but waiting for further stimulus to approach nearer.

Conviction refers chiefly to the understanding, which it affects by arguments; persuasion, on the other hand, while it also appeals to the understanding, goes beyond it, and appeals still farther to the will. It seeks to attain its purpose, first, by showing that the thing in question is right or wrong; and, secondly, that it is desirable or otherwise. It therefore makes use not only of those argu-

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ments that are addressed to the reason, but also of those which appeal to the passions.

Persuasion is more powerful than conviction, first, because men are always moved more readily, and at the same time more forcibly, by their feelings than by their reason; secondly, because even when the reason is convinced, men are not always ready to follow out their convictions. This is a well-known fact in human nature, and it has given rise to familiar maxims and proverbs, such as:

> "Silenced, but not convinced."
> "Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor."
> "He that complies against his will, is of the same opinion still."

This purpose enters so largely into literature that, as we have seen, rhetoric has been defined as the "art of persuasion."

Narrative works exhibit it in those histories which are written with a bias, where the author endeavors to inculcate his own sentiments; in biographies, where the writer endeavors to win over the reader to his own view of the subject by presenting it in the most attractive manner. It also appears in prose fiction, in all those works which are composed for the purposes of inculcating some lesson. Thus "The Pilgrim's Progress" seeks to draw man to a religious life; Johnson's "Rasselas" recommends high morals and integrity; "The Vicar of Wakefield" al-

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lures by its display of the simple virtues of humble piety. All fables, parables, and allegories have the same purpose.

In expository writings the aim is more directly stated, tho not with greater power. Within this class are included all those works which are written for the purpose of recommending virtue and religion, or for inculcating truth, or for disseminating new doctrines. Examples of this may be found in nearly all the leading essayists—Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, Addison, Steele, Johnson, Macaulay, De Quincey, Carlyle, Emerson, and many others.

Oratory is preeminently the art of persuasion, having thus gained the title which was once applied to rhetoric. For the orator by his very attitude finds it his best interest to conciliate the audience, and he does this in many ways, among which the most influential is to assume that they are not altogether opposed to him, or that at least they are impartial. Hence he aims not so much at conviction, for that is directed to those who are acknowledged as opposed, as at persuasion, which is directed towards those who are supposed to be at least ready to listen. Thus, in all his efforts to conciliate, to find some common ground for himself and for his audience, he seeks to identify himself as far as possible with them, so that he is forced by the exigency of the case to draw them by persuasion rather than compel

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them by conviction. And so, even where there is the most vehement antagonism to others, as that of Demosthenes and Æschines against one another, or that of Cicero against Catiline, or Burke against Hastings, or Webster against Hayne, the orator never loses sight of the aim to persuade his hearers. Of this nature was the fervid oratory of St.Paul, which led Agrippa to exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"—words which, in whatever way we may interpret them, testify to the earnest purpose of the apostle.

We may perceive the same thing in poetry, but nowhere more strikingly displayed than in the lyrical department. Here the appeal is uniformly to the passions. In all the various kinds of lyric poems, secular or sacred, the effect is strong, and sometimes irresistible; and it is this truth that gives point to the celebrated saying of Fletcher of Saltoun: "I knew a very wise man who believed that, if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation."

Didactic poetry shows the same purpose; as in Young's Night Thoughts, Thomson's Seasons, Cowper's Task, and others.

The Aim to Please.—4. The aim of the writer may be to please. Here the intention is to impart gratification or pleasure without any direct effort to instruct or to persuade, altho this also may be the result. This

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will be found the animating principle of a large proportion of the works of the imagination, both in prose and poetry.

This was manifestly the first aim of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* and the vast body of epic song belonging to the Trojan epopœia. In these we find much to instruct and persuade, but these are all subordinate to the main purpose, which is to please, for the very exercise of the imagination which gives pleasure to the author is presented to others, so that they shall have the same pleasure; and all the artifices of poetry—its euphony, its measures, its diction, and its figures—tend to this. Homer has been called the father of "story-tellers," and after him have come his descendants, the "story-tellers" of all ages, who are content with the simple aim of giving delight to those who may choose to listen.

In the Middle Ages the Arabians turned aside from scientific pursuits to revel in the charms of that prose fiction which we know so well under the name of the "Thousand and One Nights." The literature of Christendom arose out of the metrical romance, in which was included all that vast body of poetry belonging to the Carlovingian and Arthurian epopœias. Chaucer was a story-teller, and Spenser also; while Sir Walter Scott, who revived the metrical romance, had the same aim in poems and novels.

In prose fiction this is still more evident,

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for this is the first aim of the modern novel. Among novelists there are many who have attained to the highest places of literature: Walter Scott, who in creative genius stands next to Shakespeare; Thackeray, who in purity of English may stand beside Addison; George Eliot, who shows a Baconian capacity for maxims; Dickens, who draws all the world after him. Such writers as these have set out first with the design to please, but they have added more to this; and by their genius they have raised the novel to the place which once was held by the drama.

In dramatic literature the author's first purpose is also to please. The drama may be defined as a story told by dialog and by action. It is essential to its success, nay, even to its very existence, that the spectator be entertained; and even when the writer has a higher motive than mere pleasure, he must keep this steadily in view. Hence, while tragedy may be created from various motives, and may show the aim to please only in an inferior way, comedy elevates it to the chief position.

In expository writings, the aim to please is chiefly seen in essays, such as those of Addison, Lamb, and Thackeray. These often belong in part to humorous composition, but the humorous itself may be called an effort to please in a peculiar direction.

The Union of Different Aims.—These va-

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rious purposes have been considered separately for the sake of convenience, but in reality they do not often exist separately, being generally found in union with one another. This is particularly the case with conviction and persuasion, which are united so frequently that many rhetoricians regard them as inseparable. In order to have a complete view of this subject, it will now be necessary to notice the chief cases in which they are thus united.

1. Where the chief purpose is to instruct, and the subordinate to convince or persuade.

This is most visible in historical works. Every historian has certain views of his own which appear in his writings, and are often urged upon the reader. Thus, while the first aim of history is generally to instruct, there is the subsidiary aim to persuade the reader to adopt the writer's own opinions. In Clarendon's history, the instruction imparted is associated with the author's evident devotion to the Stuart cause. In Gibbon's great work, the information conveyed is often modified and colored by insinuations against Christianity, made by a writer who has been described by Byron as—

> "Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer
> The lord of irony."

Macaulay, while he instructs us in English history, exhibits his strong Whig sympathies; and Lingard shows his Roman Catholic pro-

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clivities while treating of the same subject. Among the numerous histories of Greece, some advocate monarchy, others republicanism. This is the meaning of onesidedness or partiality in the historian. In the generality of cases he must show this, for an author must needs feel some deep interest in his subject in order to write well, and this interest naturally shows itself in a partizan spirit. It is not every one who can write like Thucydides, and give instruction for all time in such a way that his own personality is sunk, and his personal feelings or sympathies shall be a matter of dispute or conjecture. The bitterness of Tacitus is so intense that he has been charged with exaggeration, and Josephus is accused by De Quincey of treason to his people, and corrupt subserviency to Roman interests.

The same union of purposes may be found in oratory, for the speaker often has occasion to indulge in narration or description which is made use of to advocate his own views. Thus Demosthenes, in his oration on the Crown already alluded to, gives very valuable instruction where he goes over the history of his life and policy, while in addition to this he maintains that his policy was right and honorable. In the greater part of Burke's speeches, apart from the argument, there will be found the most valuable information on many subjects.

In science, philosophy, and theology, in-

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struction is given by the statement of the leading truths, doctrines, or facts, while the effort to persuade or convince is seen in the author's advocacy of his own views or theories.

2. Where the chief purpose is to instruct, and the subordinate to please.

These are blended, as a popular way of conveying information. Thus in books of travel we find the narrative of important facts combined with amusing adventures. To this class belong those histories which are told in a lively style and filled with entertaining anecdotes. Suetonius affords an example of this, and Boswell's "Life of Johnson" shows the same intermixture of instruction and amusement.

In oratory the modern lecture may be mentioned, if, indeed, it be proper to consider this as oratory. Here knowledge is often imparted, while the aim to please is manifest by the efforts which the lecturer makes to attract and retain the attention of his hearers.

Modern science resorts largely to this as a means of commending itself to the public, and illustrations might be drawn from numerous works with which all are familiar. The leading savants do not disdain the work of giving pleasure, and the writings of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Proctor, and others, may be mentioned as conspicuous examples of works which please while they instruct.

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3. Where the chief aim is to convince or persuade, and the subordinate to please.

In nearly all the narrative works already mentioned, as exhibiting a desire to persuade, an effort to please is also perceptible. For the historian or biographer is generally desirous of affording entertainment to his reader, so as to lead him with him.

In controversial writings the effort to convince or persuade is often associated with entertainment in the shape of ridicule directed against the adversary. To anything like this men always listen with pleasure, and are insensibly affected by it. For ridicule is a potent weapon of offense, and affects the will instantaneously, and often premanently.

4. Where the chief aim is to please, and the subordinate to instruct.

Examples of this are to be found in the works of the imagination. Thus in such poems as the *Iliad* the first aim is undoubtedly to please; but the poet brings forward so many admirable scenes and characters, and gives utterance to so many pregnant sayings, that no one can avoid receiving valuable lessons. This is also visible in dramatic literature and in prose fiction, in fables, parables, and allegories.

5. Where the chief purpose is to please, and the subordinate to convince or persuade.

This is found in those works of fiction which are designed to affect the opinions of the reader. In some of these the first aim is mani-

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festly to convince or persuade, and the effort to please is but faint; but in the majority of them the higher purpose is veiled, or kept in a subordinate position. Religious novels, and other stories written, as the saying is, "with a purpose," afford examples. Thus Thackeray makes war on the shams and conventionalisms of modern society; Dickens in his various novels seeks to overthrow some conspicuous abuse; the later works of Lord Lytton show the same tendency; and at the present day a large proportion of works of fiction display an attempt to inculcate certain views of the author.

This is very evident in lyrical proetry. Great songs, such as those of Burns, or the "Marseillaise," please by their music, their rhythm, their imagery, yet sway the feelings with irresistible power, and thus exhibit the most effective kind of persuasion.

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STYLE

BY ALFRED H. WELSH

"The style is of the man."—BUFFON.

"Style is the gossamer on which the seeds of truth float through the world."

—BANCROFT.

We speak of style in architecture, in painting, in music, or in any of the fine arts, meaning thereby the mode of presentation; of style in manners, meaning the characteristic way of conducting one's self; of style in dress, meaning the prevalent fashion, or that peculiar to an individual. So style in discourse is the special manner in which thought is expressed. Note the points of difference and resemblance in the following. Observe the Anglo-Saxon simplicity of some, and the classical stateliness of others. One shows a decided preference for short sentences, another for long. Here the movement is calm and regular; there, disjointed, jerky, volcanic:

"A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.' And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in

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riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."—BIBLE.

"Were I ambitious of any other patron than the public, I would inscribe this work to a statesman who, in a long, a stormy, and at length an unfortunate administration, had many political opponents almost without a personal enemy; who has retained on his fall from power many faithful and disinterested friends, and who under the pressure of severe infirmity enjoys the lively vigor of his mind and the felicity of his incomparable temper." —GIBBON.

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Out upon your guarded lips. Sew them up with pack-thread—do. Else, if you would be a man, speak what you think to-day in words as hard as cannon-balls, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks, in words as hard again—though it contradict everything you said to-day. 'Ah, then,' exclaimed the aged ladies, 'you shall be sure

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to be misunderstood.' Misunderstood! It is a right fool's word."—EMERSON.

"To omit mere prurient susceptivities that rest on vacuum; look at poor Byron, who really had much substance in him. Sitting there in his self-exile, with a proud heart striving to persuade itself that it despises the entire created universe; and far off, in foggy Babylon, let any pitifullest whipster draw pen on him, your proud Byron writhes in torture, as if the pitiful whipster were a magician, or his pen a galvanic wire struck into Byron's spinal marrow; Lamentable, despicable, one had rather be a kitten and cry mew! Oh, son of Adam, great or little, according as thou art lovable, those thou livest with will love thee!"—CARLYLE.

"Style" is from the Latin *stylus*, a steel instrument used by the Romans for writing on waxen tablets. By an easy metaphor it came to denote the method of composition, as "pen" is now frequently a symbol for author or literature.

Subjective Aspect.—As the attire, the behavior, the air, indicate the disposition and habits of the person—whether cleanly or slovenly, tasteful or tawdry, sensible or foolish, refined or boorish—so a writer's style is, in no unimportant sense, the material expression of his soul-life; for his words are but the outward signs, the visible copies, of his ideas. His choice of terms, his way of putting them together, make (to speak con-

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ventionally) the garment of his thought, showing by the fall of the folds (when once you have learned to read) what he likes, what he can do,—his clumsiness, his cleverness, his imagination, his delights. If the words carry too much ornament, you may know that he is greedy of pleasure; if too little, that he is hard, dry, insensitive, and the like; if too great bulk, that he is affected; if full of commonplaces set forth with solemnity or flourish, that he is silly; if volubly uttered, with volume of sound, reaching us as sounds and nothing more, that he is unreal and hollow; if murky or obscure, that he has a confused habit of mind, vagueness and indirectness of purpose. At root, the virtues of style are moral. Hence the saying of Milton, that he who would write good poetry must make his life a poem. It is partly, no doubt, because style is the unconscious revelation of the hidden self, that men are influenced by language as much as by ideas.

Objective Aspect.—Tho style receives its peculiar form chiefly from the mental movements of which it is the expression, it is greatly modified by external conditions—as fulness and force of vocabulary; the choice, number, and arrangement of words; frequency of practise in composition; completeness of preparation, and carefulness of finish; the nature of the subjects treated, the end sought, and the power of persons addressed. The inner and the outer, the original

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and the acquired, blend and reveal themselves in the result.

Diversities.—Style, then, varies with many considerations, but preeminently with character. In literature as in painting, Orientals are more fanciful or picturesque than Europeans; savages than civilized men. The Italians are warm and passionate; the French, rapid and sparkling: the Germans, clumsy and unwieldy—Lessing, Richter, and a few others, excepted.

Again, the manner of one age differs from that of another. No Englishman now writes in the style of King Alfred or of Bacon. The literary garniture of the Elizabethans, like that of their bodies, was stiff and elaborate—in keeping with their peaked beards, starched collars, trunk hose, and quilted doublets. In Pope's day—the day of powdered queues, cocked hats, and lace ruffles—style was highly artificial, even finical, like the manners and fashions of society. To-day the stately periods of Johnson would not be tolerated.

The individual writers of any age, indeed, bear to each other a general resemblance in the method of expressing their thoughts, as they do in their dispostions and tastes; yet, as with the leaves of the forest, there are never two indistinguishably alike. The more original and creative the writer, the more distinctive his style. Where is he that could wear successfully the livery of Carlyle? Men will have similar or dissimilar styles, accord-

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ing as they have similar or dissimilar natures and environments.

Obviously there are many possible divisions of style, to be expressed by a great variety of adjectives, according to the quality which serves as a principle of division. Thus with respect to the number of words, it may be called concise, sententious, laconic, terse, copious, diffuse, verbose, etc.; with respect to arrangement, natural, inverted, loose, periodic, smooth or flowing, easy or graceful, etc. A composition abounding in any one of the figures would be described by a derivative from that figure; as metaphorical, antithetical, epigrammatic, ironical, elliptical, etc. The use of ornament in general would be designated, according to the amount of imagery present, by such epithets as elegant, flowery, ornate, imaginative. A style characterized by misplaced and overwrought finery is said to be florid; if marked by commonplaces floridly expressed, with more or less of mock or real enthusiasm, it is said to be stilted or sentimental; if very extravagant and enthusisatic, ranting; if studiously clothing plain and simple matter in long, ponderous words, pretentious; if gaudily and deceitfully ornamental, meritricious; if high-sounding—big, with little or no meaning—pompous, grandiloquent, sophomoric, bombastic. If the writer is constantly thrusting forward his own personality, he is egotistic. If he abounds in common forms of expres-

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sion—if he is familiar, yet rises in some degree above the conversational, he is idiomatic and simple. His diction is seemingly artless. He writes so easily that the reader imagines he can write as well himself. If his words are swelling, if his sentences are long and involved, if his tone is constrained, he is labored. Either if he alludes frequently to the literature or history of Greece and Rome, or if he writes in accordance with the best standards, he is classical. If he conveys by hint or implication much that is not actually expressed, he is suggestive. If he possesses much human interest, warmth of heart, he is sympathetic or humane. Possessing humanity in a high degree, he will usually be popular. If he exhibits a ready flow of words and great ease of composition, he is fluent. If rich in thought as well as copious in diction he is affluent. If he has vivacity, accompanied by novelty and wit, he is racy. If his imagery is refined, his suggestions delicate, and his expressions tenderly graceful, he is *spirituelle.* A style which has some ornament and considerable polish, is neat; if destitute of figures, wit, humor, and blood, it is dry—tolerable in didactic writing only; if clear and simple, not harsh, yet without mere embellishment, it is plain.

Many of the features denoted by the above and other adjectives will not seldom be found to coexist in the same author, while one or more may be especially prominent. Thus Mil-

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ton is massive, dignified, classical, imaginative, etc.; Locke and Swift are plain, idiomatic, etc.; Macaulay is brilliant, etc.; Thackeray is vivacious, open, etc.; Addison is flowing, elegant, etc.; Goldsmith and Irving are graceful, humane, etc.; Carlyle is rugged, vehement, etc.; Ruskin is stately, affluent, etc.; Shelley and Keats are *spirituelle*, suggestive, etc.; Emerson is concise, energetic, terse, etc.; Tennyson, correct, polished, ornate; Hawthorne, pure, delicate, flowing, placid; Shakespeare, versatile, forestlike. The perfect writer's style will be, not a pipe, but an organ, with many banks of keys.

Primary Qualities.—No absolute standard is to be set up. The style demanded in any composition depends upon the man, the theme, and the end. That will be good, relatively to the individual, in which his peculiarities have full and free play. That will be good generally in which proper words are put in proper places, and are vitalized by the thought. All good styles, whatever their minor differences, should possess certain leading properties. If a writer would be easily understood, he must be clear. If he would secure the highest adaptation of form to the object proposed, he must please: and if he would please, as well as inform, he must be refined or choice. If he would impress himself upon others, he must be vigorous. Thus the great excellence of method—the characteristics in which reputable method ought to

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agree, are perspicuity, elegance, and energy. Of these three, the first is the most essential. Without this, which is as light to the eye, the effect of the others is lost. The second, which assumes various positions in the different kinds of prose, ranging from the lowest degree to the highest, from the mere luster of clearness to the beauty and grace of life, is, in some of its elements, a supplementary cause of force, and is always necessary to give pleasure to taste. It becomes the more imperative as culture increases. The third, in its several aspects of thoroughness, rapidity, and directness, or of strength, vicacity, and vigor, stands intimately connected with the will, and is only secondary to the first, whether the purpose be to instruct, to convince, or to persuade. If the presentation be feeble, dull, and heavy, the thought can not excite the mental powers of the reader or hearer.

Fundamental Principles.—Underlying all these varieties and all rhetorical maxims, are two laws, forever to be regarded by whoever wishes to write or to speak words that will be felt—the economy and the stimulation of attention. The former may be thus stated and explained:

Regarding language as an apparatus of symbols for the conveyance of thought, we may say that, as in a mechanical apparatus, the more simple and the better arranged its parts, the greater will be the effect produced. In either case, whatever force is absorbed by

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the machine is deducted from the result. A reader or listener has at each moment but a limited amount of mental power available. To recognize and interpret the symbols presented to him, requires part of this power; to arrange and combine the images suggested requires a further part; and only that part which remains can be used for realizing the thought conveyed. Hence, the more time and attention it takes to receive and understand each sentence, the less time and attention can be given to the contained idea; and the less vividly will that idea be conceived.

To prevent unnecessary waste is, then, an important secret of effect. Another mode of reaching the same result is to stimulate mental action by appeals to the imagination, by variations of method, and by intensity of feeling. To charm the fancy by a figure, or to please the sense of melody by a cadence, is, often, to deepen the impression of the sentiment. The declarative form is quite as economical as the interrogative; but a hearer who is listless while assertions only are made, will be upon the alert when he is appealed to by a question. Words which come from no deeper source than the lips, lack a most potent element of effectiveness. "Logic set on fire" is one of the recorded definitions of eloquence. "Heat is life, and cold is death," says the scientist. Unction marks furrows in hearts. Unbroken uniformity, again, becomes offensive. If a flower be held to the nose too

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long, we become insensible to its odor. Few read the authors that always seem to sound the self-same note.

Importance.—If a style is the rendering more or less justly the inward life, if that thought which is your concern can reach the mind completely and with all its advantages only when it is well expressed, it ought not to be necessary to insist that style is a great matter. How many are there who know how to think that do not know how to write? "To write well," says Buffon, "is at once to think well, to feel well, and to render well." To neglect form is thus to neglect, in some sort, the life and the faculty of communication.

Style is the artistic part of literature, hardly less valuable than the substance, if the product is to be permanent. It is the principal feature in which the writer can be original. Out of the same stones may be reared a Parthenon or a tavern. Shakespeare's power lay not in finding out new material, but in imparting new life to whatever he discovered; Carlyle's, not in the novelty of what he has said, but in the *way* in which he has said it. In Shelley's verse, in Hawthorne's periods, in Ruskin's grand harmonies, who is not sensible of influences quite distinct from the matter? The same thought, expressed by one author, will make us yawn, by another will startle us. An inferior work may obtain passport to futurity through

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witchery of form, while a work of merit may fail of success through lack of formal excellence. Said Napoleon: "What is called style, good or bad, does not affect me. I care only for the force of the thought." As well might he have said that he cared nothing for the arrangement of his soldiers in battle—only for the energy with which they would fight. "The fighting power of soldiers," says Dr. Mathews, "depends upon the tactical skill with which they are handled; and the force of ideas depends upon the way in which the verbal battalions that represent them are marshaled in the battle-fields of thought."

Cultivation.—Style, since it partakes of the characteristics of the individual, is, like any other quality, improvable. *Think and read closely,* with the steady direction of the mind to one thing. Clear, concise, and vigorous expression must spring from a well-furnished mind, having a full grasp, a distinct view of the subject, the end, and the means. Whoever is master of his thought, is master of the word fitted to express it; while he who only half possesses it, seeks in vain to torture out of language the secret of that inspiration which should be in himself. It was the boast of Dante that no word has ever forced him to say what *he* would not, tho he had forced many a word to say what *it* would not. Nor can the most brilliant intellect do without an accumulated fund of facts and ideas. Be-

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fore Johnson began the *Rambler*, he had filled a commonplace book with materials. Addison amassed three folios of thought and illustrations before he began the *Spectator;* and after the *Guardian* was finished he replied to the suggestion of a friend, "I must now take some time *pour me délasser*, and *lay in fuel* for a future work."

Compose frequently and deliberately.—Excellences of mind are less the gift of nature than the rewards of industry. It is only by the discipline of energetic action that the veteran accomplishes with ease what seemed impossible to the raw recruit. It was after years of labor that Raphael was able to throw his conception upon canvas, perfect and complete, without the necessity of realizing it by piecemeal in intermediate attempts. It was because Gibbon had long written studiously, that he could send the last three volumes of the "Decline and Fall" to the press in the first draft. "The style of an author," he says, "should be an image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise." Says Quintilian: "I enjoin that such as are beginning the practise of composition write slowly and with anxious deliberation. Their great object, at first, should be to write as well as possible; practise will enable them to write quickly. By degrees, matter will offer itself still more readily; words will be at hand; composition will flow; everything, as in the arrangement of a well-

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ordered family, will present itself in its proper place. The sum of the whole is this: by hasty composition we shall never acquire the art of composing well; by writing well, we shall soon be able to write speedily."

Revise carefully.—The best writers and the ablest speakers have devoted great labor to the correction and refinement of details. Swift tested the intelligibleness of his sentences by reading them to the unlearned. Burke's manuscript was covered with interlineations and alterations. When a lady asked Johnson, after an elaborate revision of his early papers in the *Rambler*, whether he could now improve any of them, he replied: "Yes, madam, I could make even the best of them better still." Sterne spent six months in perfecting a diminutive volume. Buffon made eleven drafts of his "Nature" before he sent it to the press. Cervantes took twelve years to write the second part of *Don Quixote*.

Read thoroughly the standard English and American authors.—As the young painter or sculptor, not content with text-books and lectures, spends months or years in the galleries of Florence and Rome, in order to learn how the great masters of form and color wrought their miracles of art, so the student of style should devote himself to the masterpieces of literature, in order to enrich his vocabulary, to acquire in some degree the secret of their power, to detect his own deficiencies, to ele-

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vate and refine his taste. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." One's words, like his manners, depend largely on the company kept, and are learned largely by unconscious imitation. Choose the best, whether of newspapers or of books. "To write well," says Dryden, "one must have frequent habitudes with the best company." Quintilian advised his pupils, also, to practise what is called paraphrase with reference to prose, and metaphrase with reference to poetry. They consist alike in translating passages from good authors into other words in the same tongue. Franklin added the converse of paraphrase. He laid aside his version of Addison, for example, until he had forgotten the phraseology of the original, and then turned it back, with as close conformity to Addison's style as he was able to command. Even better, perhaps, is the practise of translating from one language into another. The learner is thus guarded against becoming a servile copyist. He paints a similar picture, but with different pigments.

Remember that splendid phrases and swelling sentences can form no substitute for knowledge and reflection. Dr. Whately's advice is excellent: "Let an author study the best models—mark their beauties of style, and dwell upon them, that he may insensibly catch the habit of expressing himself with Elegance; and when he has completed any composition, he may revise it, and cautiously

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alter any passage that is awkward and harsh, as well as those that are feeble and obscure: but let him never, while writing, think of any beauties of style; but content himself with such as may occur spontaneously. He should carefully study Perspicuity as he goes along; he may also, tho more cautiously, aim in like manner at Energy; but if he is endeavoring after Elegance, he will hardly fail to betray that endeavor; and in proportion as he does this, he will be so far from giving pleasure, to good judges, that he will offend more than by the rudest simplicity. If you would be accurate, be true; if clear, write with sympathy and a desire to be intelligible; if powerful, be earnest; if pleasant, cultivate a sense of rhythm and order."

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READY WRITERS

BY FRANCIS JACOX

PLUTARCH, ever fond of parallels, and so of contrasts, puts in contrast the poetry of Antimachaus and the portraits of Dionysius—alike in traces of effort, and redolent of the lamp—with the paintings of Nicomachus and the verses of Homer, alike struck off with readiness and ease. Cicero compliments his brother, Quintus Tullius, on having despatched four tragedies in sixteen days. Horace refers, not in the way of compliment, to a certain Cassius, whose custom it was to compose four hundred verses every day. If this was the Cassius of Parma who is said to have been burned with his books, one can easily understand how easily he came by his funeral pile. The poem composed by Statius the younger, in honor of the marriage of Aruntius Stella, was professedly completed in two days, tho containing two hundred and seventy-seven hexameters,—and Martial is supposed to have glanced at this epithalamium in an epigram on verse-making convivial and compulsory. Varus, another name of some note (but that not much) in the decline of Latin poetry, signalized himself by writing two hundred lines every day. The facility with which Galen wrote is proved

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by the great extent and diversified range of his *opera necnon opuscula omnia.*

Cicero may or may not have been ironical in "complimenting" his brother on his speed in composition. Any compliment addressed to him upon his own, he would have had the right to take seriously. During this retirement as a bereaved father, he wrote more books than M. Villemain finds it easy to follow in imagination: "On a peine à concevoir combien d'ouvrages il écrivit pendant ce long deuil." Excluding the Tusculan disputations and the treatise on Laws, which are still extant, in however mutilated a form, he finished within the same year his "Hortensius," so dear to St. Augustin, his "Academics," in four books, and a funeral eulogium on Porcia, Cato's sister. Reflecting on this *prodigieuse facilité,* always combined with the most severe perfection, the French critic just named can find in all literature nothing more astounding than the genius of Marcus Tullius Cicero.

Would Tully have complimented his brother, had the rate of his dramatic productions been that of Lope de Vega or of Hardy? Hardy bargained with the French comedians of his day—and he was nearly as much the creature of a day as they were—to keep them supplied with as many new plays as ever they could wish for; and that he kept his word may be inferred from a complacent boast in the preface to his fifth volume, that

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he had written more than six hundred dramas. Jodelle, again, who was frequently charged by Henry II. to provide the French court with dramatic *divertisements*, is known to have devoted no more than ten forenoons to any one of his tragedies, while his comedy of *Eugène* was finished in four sittings. As for Lope de Vega, well may Mr. Ticknor treat his çharacteristic facility as akin to improvisation. He is said to have dictated verse more rapidly than an amanuensis could take it down, and to have written out in two days a play which a copyist could scarcely manage to transcribe within the same time. The Homeric epithet of *inarithmeticable* is perhaps the fittest descriptive of his sum total.

Dryden's rival, "fat hulking Shadwell," dashed off his comedies as fast as he could write. In one year, 1678, Dryden himself published six complete plays, with what Johnson terms a celerity of performance which, tho all Langbaine's charges of plagiarism should be allowed, shows such facility of composition, such readiness of language, and such copiousness of sentiment, as since the name of Lope de Vega perhaps no other author had ever possessed. On the other hand, Dryden avowedly spent a fortnight in composing and correcting the "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day." But what is this, Johnson exclaims, to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose "Equivoque," a poem of only three hundred and forty-six lines, took from

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his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it? Boileau, however, could openly compliment, and perhaps inwardly envied, the rapidity with which Molière composed:

> "Rare et sublime esprit, dont la fertile veine
> Ignore en écrivant le travail et la peine."

Rousseau was free to own, in regard of his four letters to M. de Malesherbes (in 1762), which he dashed off *sans brouillon, rapidement, à trait de plume,* and without so much as reading them over before committing them to the press, that they were probably the only thing he wrote with ease his whole life long. Jean Jacques, with all his morbid excess of vanity, seems to have been not vain enough—perhaps for once he was too proud—to emulate Voltaire's boast of doing a tragedy at the rate of more than an act a day. There is a dash at least of the pride that apes humility in Byron's avowal to Moore, ("What I would not say to everybody,") that he wrote "The Bride of Abydos" in four days and "The Corsair" in ten. He professes to take this to be a most humiliating confession, as proving his own want of judgment in publishing, and the public's in reading, things which "can not have stamina for permanent attention." The German novelist Hoffmann's works were written with what Mr. Carlyle called "incredible speed"; and many are the marks they bear of haste; in-

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deed it is seldom that any piece is perfected, or its "brilliant and often genuine elements blended in harmonious union." The same critic comments on the high proficiency of Scott in what he terms the "extempore style" of writing,—Sir Walter's rapidity being extreme, and "the matter produced excellent, considering." Mr. Carlyle hails it as a valuable faculty, this of ready writing, and even affirms that for Scott's purpose it was clearly the only good mode; for by much labor he could not have added one guinea to his copyright, nor could the reader on the sofa have lain a whit more at ease. "It was in all ways necessary that these works should be produced rapidly; and, round or not, be thrown off like Giotto's O." But, on the other hand, the critic would not be himself if he failed, at the same time, strenuously to urge that, in the way of writing, no great thing was ever or will ever be done with ease, but with difficulty. He bids ready writers with any faculty in them lay this to heart: it is not with ease that any man shall do his best, in any shape. "Vergil and Tacitus, were they ready writers? The whole Prophecies of Isaiah are not equal in extent to this cobweb of a review article." Shakespeare, it is admitted, may be supposed to have written with rapidity, but not till he had thought with intensity. And herein, we are assured, truly lies the secret of the matter: such swiftness of mere writing,

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after due energy of preparation, is doubtless the right method. "The hot crucible having long worked and simmered, let the pure gold flow out at one gush. It was Shakespeare's plan: no easy writer he, or he had never been a Shakespeare." Milton, again, the same authority sharply distinguishes in the same way from the mob of gentlemen who write with ease; nor did he attain Shakespeare's faculty of ever writing fast *after* long preparation, but struggled while he wrote. Did Dante write easily,—he that saw himself "growing lean" over his "Divine Comedy"? Did Petrarch? Goethe tells us he "had nothing sent him in his sleep"; and Schiller, as an unfortunate and unhealthy man, "*konnte nie fertig werden,*" never could get done. But to recur to Scott. His rapidity Mr. Carlyle takes to be a proof and consequence of the solid health of the man, bodily and spiritual; a proof of his soundness of nervous system, his practicality of mind, and of his having the knack of his trade. In the most flattering view, rapidity is thus accepted as betokening health of mind; but much also, perhaps most of all, will depend on health of body. William Cobbett is cited, one of the healthiest of men, as a greater improviser than even Walter Scott. Pierre Bayle is cited, as the writer of enormous folios, "one sees not on what motive-principle; he flowed on forever, a mighty tide of ditch-water; and even died flowing, with the pen in his hand."

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But to Mr. Carlyle's thinking, the most unaccountable ready-writer of all, probably, is the common editor of a daily newspaper. Mr. Thackeray, however, awards the palm to the fashionable authoress. The thousands of pages that Lady Flummery has covered with ink he declares to be past belief. The readiest of ready pens has she: her Pekasus gallops over hotpressed satin so as to distance all gentlemen riders: like Camilla, it scours the plain—of Bath, and never seems punished or fatigued; only in runs so fast that it leaves all sense behind it. Contrast Miss Mitford's "It is a tremendous undertaking!" on actually beginning a novel; "for I write with extreme slowness, labor, and difficulty; and, whatever you (Haydon) may think, there is a great difference of facility in different minds. I am the slowest writer, I suppose, in England, and touch and retouch perpetually." Many years later we find her telling another correspondent, "For my own part, I am convinced that without pains there will be no really good writing. I find the most successful writers the most careful." And she asserts herself still so difficult to satisfy, that she has written a long preface (of some forty pages) to her collected dramatic works three times over, many parts far more than three times; and can foresee that there will still be much to do when the proofs go through her hands. To Mr. J. S. Mill, as editor of a quarterly review, M. de Tocqueville, as a

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contributor, writes: "You must think me very slow. You would forgive me if you knew how hard it is for me to satisfy myself, and how impossible for me to finish things incompletely." He has always thought, he says, that the public has the right to require authors to strain their powers to their utmost, and he endeavors to act up to this duty.

Plutarch cites the case of Agatharcus the painter bragging of the celerity and ease with which he despatched his pieces, to whom Zeuxis replied, "If I boast, it shall be of the slowness with which I finish mine." It is quite possible to overdo this. Samuel Rogers is known as one of the authors who have taken too much pains with their writings: the "Pleasures of Memory" employed him seven years, "Columbus" fourteen, "Human Life" six, "Italy" fourteen; and even after the publication of these poems he did not cease to correct them. In these days of hasty composition, it has been said, one can not but respect so much patience and so much concentrated labor, and well-known maxims would lead one to anticipate that very great excellence would be the result. A sage authority believes these maxims to be, in most cases, erroneous, and that such extremely slow production is very rarely favorable to the production of works of genius. "Writers forget what they mean to say. Who can answer for the exact shade of thought which he intended to express nine years ago?" A

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student of the most celebrated poems of Mr. Rogers discovers many expressions out of which a patient elaboration has extracted the whole meaning, and many paragraphs of which the first flow has been destroyed by interpolated thoughts and gradually modified ideas. Bembo, perhaps the most distinguished of the Ciceronians of the *renaissance*, is said to have had in use forty portfolios, into each of which passed in succession every page he wrote, that it might be subjected step by step to all the corrections (call them stripes,—forty, *not* save one) of his exacting taste. Malherbe was another Rogers in fastidious slowness. He would spoil half a quire of paper in composing and decomposing and recomposing a stanza. It is reckoned that, during the twenty-five most prolific years of his life, he composed no more than, on the average, thirty-three verses per annum. Of Balzac (the seventeenth century one, not the nineteenth,) it has been said that he took as much pains to pen a paragraph as the ancient sculptors did to make a god. Some of the "Maximes" of La Rochefoucauld were amended more than thirty times, before he could compass the precision of express he deemed indispensable. As Mr. Carlyle is free to allow, in his "Life of Schiller," there is a purism in taste, in rigid fantastical demand of perfection, a horror at approaching the limits of vulgarity, which obstructs the frank impulse of the faculties, and, if excessive,

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would altogether deaden them. But the opposite excess he contends to be much more frequent, and, for high endowments, infinitely more pernicious. "That too much care does hurt in any of our tasks is a doctrine so flattering to indolence, that we ought to receive it with extreme caution." Of all our authors he takes Gray to be perhaps the only one that from fastidiousness of taste has written less than he should have done; while there are thousands that have erred the other way.

Sir Joshua Reynolds made the just observation, that, altho men of ordinary talents may be highly satisfied with their productions, men of true genius never are. Cowper quotes the remark applaudingly in one of his letters; and to Cowper himself the remark has been particularly applied, for he took infinite pains with his verses, and was seldom satisfied with them in the end. The practical value of all this toil and care is well said by Mr. Robert Bell to be exhibited instructively in the result; his labor obliterated all traces of labor; shaping his thoughts, after repeated experiments, into just and natural forms, he made them come out with an appearance of the most unpremeditated ease. The little poem, of three stanzas only, "On a Goldfinch," he kept under the revising process for several months, and polishing it, he tells us, as a lapidary "rubs away the roughness of a stone." "I never suffer a line to pass," he says on another occasion, "till I have

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made it as good as I can." But he set too just a value upon time to emulate the finical scrupulosity attributed to Waller, who, says Fenton, spent the greater part of a summer in correcting a poem of ten lines—which precious decade was inscribed in her Grace of York's copy of Tasso. Southey, midway in "Madoc," declared himself convinced that the best way of writing is to write rapidly, and correct at leisure: " 'Madoc' would be a better poem if written in six months, than if six years were devoted to it." Of "Thalaba" he writes, when finished, and half ready for the press: "I am polishing and polishing, and hewing it to pieces with surgeon severity. Yesterday I drew the pen across 600 lines." The quickest run (in sailors' phrase) that he ever made was 1200 lines in a week. he tells Mr. Landor; adding, "but this is nothing to what you have accomplished," in "Count Julian"; "and your manner involves so much thought (excess of meaning being its fault), that the same number of lines must cost thrice as much expense of passion and of the reasoning faculty to you as they would to me." It is observable how strenuous Southey was in disclaiming, after a certain period of life, the facility and speed of composition imputed to him. To one of his publishers he writes in 1835: "It is long since I have been a rapid writer: the care with which I write, and the pains which I take in collecting materials and making myself fully acquainted with the

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subject before me, render it impossible that I should be so." And two years later he assures his excellent friend old Mr. Bedford, "As for eagerness of composition, my dear Grosvenor, whatever ardor of that kind I once possessed has long since been expanded. For many years whatever I have written has been composed slowly and deliberately." The "Colloquies" were for long years in hand, and he even asserted of perhaps every paper he wrote for the *Quarterly Review* after the first six or eight numbers, that it cost him thrice the time in composing that it would have cost any one else, to say nothing of the time employed in reading for the specific subject. Dr. Johnson was for advising every young man beginning to compose, to do it as fast as he can, to get a habit of having his mind to start promptly; so much more difficult is it to improve in speed than in accuracy. Dr. Watson's avowed preference for accuracy, lest one should get bad habits of composing in a solvenly manner, only moved Johnson to a "Why, sir, you are confounding *doing* inaccurately with the *necessity* of doing inaccurately. A man knows when his composition is inaccurate, and when he thinks fit he'll correct it. But if a man is accustomed to compose slowly, and with difficulty, upon all occasions, there is danger that he may not compose at all, as we do not like to do that which is not done easily; and, at any rate, more time is con-

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sumed in a small matter than ought to be." Dr. Watson thought to pose Johnson by the stubborn fact that Blair took a week to compose a sermon. "Then, sir," rejoined the English doctor, "that is for want of the habit of composing quickly, which I am insisting one should acquire." Dr. Blair's credit being creditably dear to Dr. Watson, the latter explained that the reverend Hugh was not composing all the week, but only such hours as he found himself disposed for composition. "Nay, sir," was Johnson's reply, "unless you tell me the time he took, you tell me nothing. If I say I took a week to walk a mile, and have had the gout five days, and been ill otherwise another day, I have taken but one day." And he went to say, he, the author of the *Rambler*, the poet, pamphleteer, dictionary doctor, and what not, that he had himself composed about forty sermons: that he had begun a sermon after dinner, and sent it off by post that night. He wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of his "Life of Savage" at a sitting; but then he sat up all night. Six sheets in a day had he written of translation from the French. Boswell's interpolated remark, in the capacity of a good listener, that we all must have observed how one man dresses himself slowly and another fast, met with his great friend's approving assent. "Yes, sir; it is wonderful how much time some people will consume in dressing; taking up a thing

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and looking at it, and laying it down, and taking it up again. Every one should get the habit of doing it quickly. I would say to a young divine, 'Here is your text; let us see how soon you can make a sermon.' Then I'd say, 'Let me see how much better you can make it.' Thus I should see both his powers and his judgment.'' Voltaire bragged to Bernis of having composed his tragedy of ''Cassandre'' (previously entitled ''Olympie'') in six days, and calling it *L'Œuvre de Six Jours* accordingly; whereupon Bernis counseled him to bestow another six days' labor on improving, correcting, and revising the style and details of his piece. Be it admitted, however, with the leading French critic of the age of Scribe, Balzac, and Georges Sand, that, all due limitations presupposed, ''la fertilité,'' including *la facilité*, ''est une des plus grandes marques de l'esprit.'' It is of the first of the names just now cited that Sainte-Beuve has said, that to be writing plays was, with M. Scribe, in his earlier years, a trade as well as a talent, but that, in later years, to judge by the rapidly increasing number of them and their sustained success, to go on writing plays had become his pleasure and hobby,—nay, a necessity to him, and a part of his nature.

Like Southey, that very different man and writer, Sydney Smith, when he had any subject in hand, was indefatigable in reading, searching, inquiring, seeking every source of

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information, and—perhaps in this respect, *un*like Southey—discussing it with any man of sense or cultivation who crossed his path (for here the opportunities as well as the disposition of the canonical diner-out and clerical man of the world were in salient contrast with those of the recluse of Greta Hall). But having once mastered it, as Lady Holland tells us, Sydney Smith would sit down and commit his ideas to paper with the same rapidity as they flowed out in his conversation,—no hesitating, no erasures, no stopping to consider and round his periods, no writing for effect, but a pouring out of the fulness of his mind and feelings, for he was heart and soul in whatever he undertook. He mused well before he took pen in hand; but while he was musing, the fire burned, and anon he spake with his pen, *currente calamo;* and as he penned, the fire, as it were, ran along the paper.

Faria, the Portuguese author, whose ardor in literature hastened his end, wrote daily, by his own account, twelve sheets, and plumed himself on such facility in rhetorical turns and flourishes, that in a single day he could compose a hundred different addresses of congratulation and condolence, Fenélon composed "Telemaque" in three months, and there were not ten erasures in the original MS. The like facility is ascribed to Gibbon, after his first volume; and Isaac d'Israeli couples with him the author of the "Wealth

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of Nations,'' copiously dictating in fluent ease as he paced the room. Charles Dibdin's facility of composition is celebrated in the production of nine hundred songs. What has been called the finest of Oriental romances, Beckford's ''Vathek,'' was professedly composed (in French too) at a single sitting,—the writer being then in his twentieth year, before completing which he published ''Vathek,'' and was famous. How Diderot wrote long works within the week, sometimes within almost the four-and-twenty hours, surprizing proofs are on record,—only to provoke a caustic critic to the remark that internal evidence makes such feats quite credible, most of Diderot's works bearing the clearest traces of extemporaneousness; *stans pede in uno*. The German sentimentalist La Fontaine wrote with such velocity (he did, as Mr. Carlyle words it, some hundred and fifty weeping volumes in his time) that he was obliged to hold in, and ''write only two days in the week.'' The same critic makes merry, in his somber way, over that prince of all playwrights, Kotzebue, who ''could manufacture plays with a speed and facility surpassing even Edinburgh novels''—for his muse is said, like other doves, to have hatched twins in the month. M. de Rémusat wrote his two plays on the Crusaders and on the St. Domingo insurrection, ten acts, in twelve days; that is, as admiring reviewers compute it, an act a day, and after each drama a day to

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read it over: "On ne saurait entrer d'un pied plus léger dans la rapidité romantique." Both plays were lions for the season in the salons of high-bred Paris: dead lions now, this many a day. Rapidity, "as of pulsing auroras, as of dancing lightnings," is made a special characteristic of John Sterling, by his guide, philosopher, and friendly biographer, who admires his incredible facility of labor, and of putting his thoughts on paper "with a swift felicity, ingenuity, brilliancy, and general excellence, of which, under such conditions of swiftness, I have never seen a parallel. Essentially an *improviser* genius; as his father too was," the slashing Captain of the *Times*. Charles Brockden Brown's facility is called by Mr. Prescott "unpardonable precipitancy"—three of his romances (and he wrote "*Wieland*," "Arthur Mervyn," and "Edgar Huntly"; not that these were the three,) being thrown off in the course of one year—written with the printer's devil literally at his elbow; one being begun before another was completed, and all of them before a regular, well-digested plan was devised for their execution. A judicious critic of our own day complains of almost all our novel-writers as writing too fast,—some indeed making a boast of never recopying a line, and of wasting but a small amount of time on corrections of the most elementary kind; these it is who talk of sending off to the printer the first draft, just as they have

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scrawled it down, without recasting or reconsideration, as they would talk of anything else they held praiseworthy, not seeing that they are pronouncing their own condemnation when they betray their carelessness. "This easy writing is terribly hard reading, and does no one any credit—neither the writer who puts it forth without a blush, nor the public which accepts it without complaint." If it were not for a faithful few who do really take pains, and make of their work a labor of love, the critic here quoted would despair of our present race of novelists, considering the system on which they work to be so essentially untrue to art that no real good does nor can result from it.

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THE ART OF FICTION*

BY WALTER BESANT

I DESIRE, this evening, to consider Fiction as one of the Fine Arts. In order to do this, and before doing it, I have first to advance certain propositions. They are not new, they are not likely to be disputed, and yet they have never been so generally received as to form part, so to speak, of the national mind. These propositions are three, tho the last two directly spring from the first. They are:—

1. That Fiction is an Art in every way worthy to be called the sister and the equal of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Music, and Poetry; that is to say, her field is as boundless, her possibilities as vast, her excellences as worthy of admiration, as may be claimed for any of her sister Arts.

2. That it is an Art which like them, is governed and directed by general laws, and that these laws may be laid down and taught with as much precision and exactness as the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion.

3. That, like the other Fine Arts, Fiction is so far removed from the mere mechanical

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arts, that no laws or rules whatever can teach it to those who have not already been endowed with the natural and necessary gifts.

These are the three propositions which I have to discuss. It follows as a corollary and evident deduction that, these propositions once admitted, those who follow and profess the Art of Fiction must be recognized as artists, in the strictest sense of the word, just as much as those who have delighted and elevated mankind by music and painting; and that the great Masters of Fiction must be placed on the same level as the great Masters in other Arts. In other words, I mean that where the highest point, or what seems the highest point, possible in this Art is touched, the man who has reached it is one of the world's greatest men.

I can not suppose that there are any in this room who would refuse to admit these propositions; on the contrary, they will seem to most here self-evident; yet the application of theory to practise, of principle to persons, may be more difficult. For instance, so boundless is the admiration for great Masters such as Raphael or Mozart, that if one were to propose that Thackeray should be placed beside them, on the same level, and as an equal, there would be felt by most a certain shock. I am not suggesting that the art of Thackeray is to be compared with that of Raphael, or that there is any similarity in the work of the two men; I only say that,

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Fiction being one Art, and Painting another and a sister Art, those who attain the highest possible distinction in either are equal.

It is then, first and before all, a real Art. It is the oldest, because it was known and practised long before Painting and her sisters were in existence or even thought of; it is older than any of the Muses from whose company she who tells stories has hitherto been excluded; it is the most widely spread, because in no race of men under the sun is it unknown, even tho the stories may be always the same, and handed down from generation to generation in the same form; it is the most religious of all the Arts, because in every age until the present the lives, exploits, and sufferings of gods, goddesses, saints, and heroes have been the favorite theme; it has always been the most popular, because it requires neither culture, education, nor natural genius to understand and listen to a story; it is the most moral, because the world has always been taught whatever little morality it possesses by way of story, fable, apologue, parable, and allegory. It commands the widest influence, because it can be carried easily and everywhere, into regions where pictures are never seen and music is never heard; it is the greatest teaching power, because its lessons are most readily apprehended and understood. All this, which might have been said thousands of years ago, may be said to-day with even greater force and

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truth. That world which exists not, but is an invention or an imitation—that world in which the shadows and shapes of men move about before our eyes as real as if they were actually living and speaking among us, is like a great theater accessible to all of every sort, on whose stage are enacted, at our own sweet will, whenever we please to command them, the most beautiful plays: it is, as every theater should be, the school in which manners are learned: here the majority of reading mankind learn nearly all that they know of life and manners, of philosophy and art; even of science and religion. The modern novel converts abstract ideas into living models; it gives ideas, it strengthens faith, it preaches a higher morality than is seen in the actual world; it commands the emotions of pity, admiration, and terror; it creates and keeps alive the sense of sympathy; it is the universal teacher; it is the only book which the great mass of reading mankind ever do read; it is the only way in which people can learn what other men and women are like; it redeems their lives from dulness, puts thoughts, desires, knowledge, and even ambitions into their hearts: it teaches them to talk, and enriches their speech with epigrams, anecdotes and illustrations. It is an unfailing source of delight to millions, happily not too critical. Why, out of all the books taken down from the shelves of the public libraries, four-fifths are novels, and

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of all those that are bought nine-tenths are novels. Compared with this tremendous engine of popular influence, what are all the other Arts put together? Can we not alter the old maxim, and say with truth, Let him who pleases make the laws if I may write the novels?

As for the field with which this Art of Fiction occupies itself, it is, if you please, nothing less than the whole of Humanity. The novelist studies men and women; he is concerned with their actions and their thoughts, their errors and their follies, their greatness and their meanness; the countless forms of beauty and constantly varying moods to be seen among them; the forces which act upon them; the passions, prejudices, hopes and fears which pull them this way and that. He has to do, above all, and before all, with men and women. No one, for instance, among novelists, can be called a landscape painter, or a painter of sea-pieces, or a painter of fruit and flowers, save only in strict subordination to the group of characters with whom he is dealing. Landscape, sea, sky, and air, are merely accessories introduced in order to set off and bring into greater prominence the figures on the stage. The very first rule in Fiction is that the human interest must absolutely absorb everything else. Some writers never permit anything at all in their pages which shall divert our thoughts one moment from the actors. When,

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for instance, Charles Reade—Alas! that we must say the late Charles Reade, for he is dead—when this great Master of Fiction, in his incomparable tale of the "Cloister and the Hearth," sends Gerard and Denis the Burgundian on that journey through France, it is with the fewest possible of words that he suggests the sights and persons met with on the way; yet, so great is the art of the writer, that, almost without being told, we see the road, a mere rough track, winding beside the river and along the valleys; we see the silent forests where lurk the *routiers* and the robbers, the cutthroat inn, the merchants, peasants, beggars, soldiers who go riding by; the writer does not pause in his story to tell us of all this, but yet we feel it—by the mere action of the piece and the dialog we are compelled to see the scenery: the life of the fifteenth century passes before us, with hardly a word to picture it, because it is always kept in the background, so as not to interfere with the central figure of the young clerk journeying to Rome.

The human interest in Fiction, then, must come before ought else. It is of this world, wholly of this world. It might seem at first as if the limitation of this Art to things human placed it on a lower level than the Arts of Painting and Music. That, however, is not so. The stupendous subjects which were undertaken by the old Italian painters are, it

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is true, beyond the power of Fiction to attempt. It may be questioned whether they are not also, according to modern ideas, beyond the legitimate scope of painting. Certainly, just as there is nothing in the whole of creation more worthy of being studied and painted than the human face and form, so there is nothing more worthy of representation than men and women in action and in passion. The ancient poet placed the gods themselves upon the stage with the Furies and the Fates. Then we had the saints, confessors, and martyrs. We next descended to kings and great lords; in our times painter, poet, and novelist alike are contented with plain humanity, whether crowned or in rags. What picture, let us ask, what picture ever painted of angels and blessed souls, even if they are mounting the hill on which stands the Four Square City of the jasper wall, is able to command our interest and sympathy more profoundly than the simple and faithful story, truly and faithfully told, of a lover and his mistress?

It is, therefore, the especial characteristic of this Art, that, since it deals exclusively with men and women, it not only requires of its followers, but also creates in readers, that sentiment which is destined to be a most mighty engine in deepening and widening the civilization of the world. We call it Sympathy, but it means a great deal more than was formerly understood by the word. It

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means, in fact, what Professor Seeley* once called the Enthusiasm of Humanity, and it first appeared, I think, about a hundred and fifty years ago, when the modern novel came into existence. You will find it, for instance, conspicuous for its absence in Defoe. The modern Sympathy includes not only the power to pity the sufferings of others, but also that of understanding their very souls; it is the reverence for man, the respect for his personality, the recognition of his individuality, and the enormous value of the one man, the perception of one man's relation to another, his duties and responsibilities.

Through the strength of this newly-born faculty, and aided by the guidance of a great artist, we are enabled to discern the real indestructible man beneath the rags and filth of a common castaway, and the possibilities of the meanest gutter-child that steals in the streets for its daily bread. Surely that is a wonderful Art which endows the people —all the people—with this power of vision and of feeling. Painting has not done it, and could never do it; Painting has done more for nature than for humanity. Sculpture could not do it, because it deals with situation and form rather than action. Music can not do it, because Music (if I understand rightly) appeals especially to the individual concern-

* John Robert Seeley, English historian and essayist, 1834-95.

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ing himself and his own aspirations. Poetry alone is the rival of Fiction, and in this respect it takes a lower place, not because Poetry fails to reach and interpret, but because Fiction is, and must always be, more popular.

Again, this Art teaches, like the others, by suppression and reticence. Out of the great procession of Humanity, the *Comédie Humaine* which the novelist sees passing ever before his eyes, single figures detach themselves one after the other, to be questioned, examined, and received or rejected. This process goes on perpetually. Humanity is so vast a field that to one who goes about watching men and women, and does not sit at home and evolve figures out of inner consciousness, there is not, and can never be, any end or limit to the freshness and interest of these figures. It is the work of the artist to select the figures, to suppress, to copy, to group, and to work up the incidents which each one offers.

The daily life of the world is not dramatic—it is monotonous; the novelist makes it dramatic by his silences, his suppressions, and his exaggerations. No one, for example, in fiction behaves quite in the same way as in real life; as on the stage, if an actor unfolds and reads a letter, the simple action is done with an exaggeration of gesture which calls attention to the thing and to its importance; so in romance, while nothing should be

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allowed which does not carry on the story, so everything as it occurs must be accentuated and yet deprived of needless accessory details. The gestures of the characters at an important juncture, their looks, their voices, may all be noted if they help to impress the situation. Even the weather, the wind and the rain, with some writers, have been made to emphasize a mood or a passion of a heroine. To know how to use these aids artistically is to the novelist exactly what to the actor is the right presentation of a letter, the handing of a chair, even the removal of a glove.

A third characteristic of Fiction, which should alone be sufficient to give it a place among the noblest forms of Art, is that, like Poetry, Painting, and Music, it becomes a vehicle, not only for the best thoughts of the writer, but also for those of the reader, so that a novelist may write truthfully and faithfully, but simply, and yet be understood in a far fuller and nobler sense than was present to his own mind. This power is the very highest gift of the poet. He has a vision and sees a thing clearly, yet perhaps afar off; another who reads him is enabled to get the same vision, to see the same thing, yet closer and more distinctly. For a lower intellect thus to lead and instruct a higher is surely a very great gift, and granted only to the highest forms of Art. And this it is which Fiction of the best kind does for its

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readers. It is, however, only another way of saying that Truth in Fiction produces effects similar to those produced by Truth in every other Art.

So far, then, I have showed that this Art of Fiction is the most ancient of all Arts and the most popular; that its field is the whole of humanity; that it creates and develops that sympathy which is a kind of second sight; that, like all other Arts, its function is to select, to suppress, and to arrange; that it suggests as well as narrates. More might be said—a great deal more—but enough has been said to show that in these, the leading characteristics of any Art, Fiction is on exactly the same level as her sisters. Let me only add that in this Art, as in the others, there is, and will be always, whatever has been done already, something new to discover, something new to express, something new to describe. Surgeons dissect the body, and account for every bone and every nerve, so that the body of one man, considered as a collection of bones and nerves, is so far exactly like the body of another man. But the mind of man can not be so exhausted: it yields discoveries to every patient student; it is absolutely inexhaustible; it is to every one a fresh and virgin field: and the most successful investigator leaves regions and tracts for his successor as vast as those he has himself gone over. Perhaps, after all,

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the greatest Psychologist is not the metaphysician, but the novelist.

We come next to speak of the Laws which govern this Art. I mean those general rules and principles which must necessarily be acquired by every writer of Fiction before he can even hope for success. Rules will not make a man a novelist, any more than a knowledge of grammar makes a man know a language, or a knowledge of musical science makes a man able to play an instrument. Yet the Rules must be learned. And, in speaking of them, one is compelled, so close is the connection between the sister Arts, to use not only the same terms, but also to adopt the same rules, as those laid down by painters for their students. If these Laws appear self-evident, it is a proof that the general principles of the Art are well understood. Considering, however, the vast quantity of bad, inartistic work which is every week laid before the public, one is inclined to think that a statement of these principles may not be without usefulness.

First, and before everything else, there is the Rule that everything in Fiction which is invented and is not the result of personal experience and observation is worthless. In some other Arts, the design may follow any lines which the designer pleases: it may be fanciful, unreal, or grotesque; but in modern Fiction, whose sole end, aim, and purpose is to portray humanity and human character,

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the design must be in accordance with the customs and general practise of living men and women under any proposed set of circumstances and conditions. That is to say, the characters must be real, and such as might be met with in actual life, or, at least, the natural developments of such people as any of us might meet; their actions must be natural and consistent; the conditions of place, of manners, and of thought must be drawn from personal observation. To take an extreme case: a young lady brought up in a quiet country village should avoid description of garrison life; a writer whose friends and personal experiences belong to what we call the lower middle class should carefully avoid introducing his characters into Society; a South-countryman would hesitate before attempting to reproduce the North-country accent. This is a very simple Rule, but one to which there should be no exception—never to go beyond your own experience.* Remember that most of the people

* It has been objected to this Rule that, if followed, it would entirely shut out the historical novel. Not at all. The interest of the historical novel, as of any other novel, depends upon the experience and knowledge which the writer has of humanity, men and women being pretty much alike in all ages. It is not the setting that we regard, so much as the acting of the characters. The setting in an historical novel is very often absurd, incorrect, and incongruous; but the human interest, the skill and knowledge

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who read novels, and know nothing about the art of writing them, recognize before any other quality that of fidelity: the greatness of a novelist they measure chiefly by the knowledge of the world displayed in his pages; the highest praise they can bestow upon him is that he has drawn the story to

of character shown by the writer, may make us forget the errors of the setting. For instance, "Romola" is undoubtedly a great novel, not because it contains a true, and therefore valuable, reproduction of Florentine life in the time of the early Renaissance, for it does not; nor because it gives us the ideas of the age, for it does not; the characters, especially that of the heroine, being fully of nineteenth century ideas: but it is great as a study of character. On the other hand, in the "Cloister and the Hearth," we do really have a description of the time and its ideas, taken bodily, sometimes almost literally, from the pages of the man who most truly represents them—Erasmus. So that here is a rule for the historical novelist—when he must describe, he must borrow. If it be objected, again, that he may do the same thing with contemporary life, I reply that he may, if he please, but he will *most assuredly be found out* through some blunder, omission, or confusion caused by ignorance. No doubt the same blunders are perpetrated by the historical novelist; but these are not so readily found out except by an archæologist. Of course, one who desires to reproduce a time gone by would not go to the poets, the divines, the historians, so much as to the familiar literature, the letters, comedies, tales, essayists, and newspapers.

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the life. It is exactly the same with a picture. If you go to the Academy any day, and listen to the comments of the crowd, which is a very instructive thing to do, and one recommended to young novelists, you will presently become aware that the only thing they look for in a picture is the story which it tells, and therefore the fidelity with which it is presented on the canvas. Most of the other qualities of the picture, and of the novel as well, all that has to do with the technique, escape the general observer.

This being so, the first thing which has to be acquired is the art of description. It seems easy to describe; any one, it seems, can set down what he sees. But consider. How much does he see? There is everywhere, even in a room, such a quantity of things to be seen: far, far more in field and hedge, in mountain and in forest and beside the stream, are there countless things to be seen; the unpractised eye sees nothing, or next to nothing. Here is a tree, here is a flower, there is sunshine lying on the hill. But to the observant and trained eye, the intelligent eye, there lies before him everywhere an inexhaustible and bewildering mass of things to see. Remember how Mr. Jefferies sits down in a coppice with his eyes wide open to see what the rest of us never dreamed of looking for. Long before he has half finished telling us what he has seen—behold! a volume, and

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one of the most delightful volumes conceivable. But, then, Mr. Jefferies is a profound naturalist. We can not all describe after his manner; nor should we try, for the simple reason that descriptions of still life in a novel must be strictly subordinated to the human interest. But while Mr. Jefferies has his hedge and ditch and brook, we have our towns, our villages, and our assemblies of men and women. Among them we must not only observe, but we must select. Here, then, are two distinct faculties which the intending novelist must acquire; viz., observation and selection. As for the power of observation, it may be taught to any one by the simple method adopted by Robert Houdin, the French conjuror. This method consists of noting down continually and remembering all kinds of things remarked in the course of a journey, a walk, or the day's business. The learner must carry his note-book always with him, into the fields, to the theater, into the streets—wherever he can watch man and his ways, or Nature and her ways. On his return home he should enter his notes in his commonplace-book. There are places where the production of a note-book would be embarrassing—say, at a dinner-party, or a street fight; yet the man who begins to observe will speedily be able to remember everything that he sees and hears until he can find an opportunity to note it down, so that nothing is

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lost.* The materials for the novelist, in short, are not in the books upon the shelves, but in the men and women he meets with everywhere; he will find them, where Dickens found them, in the crowded streets, in trains, tramcars and omnibuses, at the shop-windows, in churches and chapels: his materials are everywhere—there is nothing too low, nothing too high, nothing too base, nothing too noble, for the novelist. Humanity is like a kaleidoscope, which you may turn about and look into, but you will never get the same picture twice—it can not be exhausted. But it may be objected, that the broad distinctive types have been long since all used. They *have* been used, but the comfort is that they can never be used up, and that they may be constantly used again and again. Can we ever be tired of them when a master hand takes one of them again and gives him new

* I earnestly recommend those who desire to study this Art to begin by daily practise in the description of things, even common things, that they have observed, by reporting conversations, and by word portraits of their friends. They will find that the practise gives them firmness of outline, quickness of observation, power of catching important details, and, as regards dialog, readiness to see what is unimportant. Preliminary practise and study of this kind will also lead to the saving of a vast quantity of valuable material, which is only wasted by being prematurely worked up into a novel written before the elements of the Art have been acquired.

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life? Are there to be no more hypocrites because we have already had Tartufe and Pecksniff? Do we suppose that the old miser, the young spendthrift, the gambler, the adventurer, the coquette, the drunkard, the soldier of fortune, are never to reappear, because they have been handled already? As long, on the contrary, as man shall continue story-telling, so long will these characters occur again and again, and look as fresh each time that they are treated by a master's hand as they were newly discovered types.

Fidelity, therefore, can be only assured by acquiring the art of observation, which further assists in filling the mind with stored experience. I am quite sure that most men never see anything at all. I have known men who have even gone all round the world and seen nothing—no, nothing at all. Emerson says, very truly, that a traveler takes away nothing from a place except what he brought into it. Now, the observation of things around us is no part of the ordinary professional and commercial life; it has nothing at all to do with success and the making of money; so that we do not learn to observe. Yet it is very easy to shake people and make them open their eyes. Some of us remember, for instance, the time when Kingsley astonished everybody with his descriptions of the wonders to be seen on the seashore and to be fished out of every pond in the field. Then all the world began to poke about

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the seaweed and to catch tritons and keep water-grubs in little tanks. It was only a fashion, and it presently died out; but it did people good, because it made them understand, perhaps for the first time, that there really is a good deal more to see than meets the casual eye. At present the lesson which we need is not that the world is full of the most strange and wonderful creatures, all eating each other perpetually, but that the world is full of the most wonderful men and women, not one of whom is mean or common, but to each his own personality is a great and awful thing, worthy of the most serious study.

There are, then, abundant materials waiting to be picked up by any who has the wit to see them lying at his feet and all around him. What is next required is the power of Selection. Can this be taught? I think not, at least I do not know how, unless it is by reading. In every Art, selection requires that kind of special fitness for the Art which is included in the much abused word Genius. In Fiction the power of selection requires a large share of the dramatic sense. Those who already possess this faculty will not go wrong if they bear in mind the simple rule that nothing should be admitted which does not advance the story, illustrate the characters, bring into stronger relief the hidden forces which act upon them, their emotions, their passions, and their in-

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tentions. All descriptions which hinder instead of helping the action, all episodes of whatever kind, all conversation which does not either advance the story or illustrate the characters, ought to be rigidly suppressed.

Closely connected with selection is dramatic presentation. Given a situation, it should be the first care of the writer to present it as dramatically, that is to say as forcibly, as possible. The grouping and setting of the picture, the due subordination of description to dialog, the rapidity of the action, those things which naturally suggest themselves to the practised eye, deserve to be very carefully considered by the beginner. In fact, a novel is like a play: it may be divided into scenes and acts, tableaus and situations, separated by the end of the chapter instead of the drop-scene: the writer is the dramatist, stage-manager, scene-painter, actor, and carpenter, all in one; it is his single business to see that none of the scenes flag or fall flat: he must never for one moment forget to consider how the piece is looking from the front.

The next simple Rule is that the drawing of each figure must be clear in outline, and, even if only sketched, must be sketched without hesitation. This can only be done when the writer himself sees his figures clearly. Characters in fiction do not, it must be understood, spring Minerva-like from the brain. They grow: they grow sometimes

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slowly, sometimes quickly. From the first moment of conception, that is to say, from the first moment of their being seen and caught, they grow continuously and almost without mental effort. If they do not grow and become every day clearer, they had better be put aside at once, and forgotten as soon as may be, because that is a proof that the author does not understand the character he has himself endeavored to create. To have on one's hands a half-created being without the power of finishing him must be a truly dreadful thing. The only way out of it is to kill and bury him at once. I have always thought, for instance, that the figure of Daniel Deronda, whose portrait, blurred and uncertain as it is, has been drawn with the most amazing care and with endless touches and retouches, must have become at last to George Eliot a kind of awful veiled specter, always in her brain, always seeming about to reveal his true features and his mind, but never doing it, so that to the end she never clearly perceived what manner of man he was, nor what was his real character. Of course, what the author can not set down, the reader can not understand. On the other hand, how possible, how capable of development, how real becomes a true figure, truly understood by the creator, and truly depicted! Do we not know what they would say and think under all conceivable conditions? We can dress them as we will; we can place

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them in any circumstances of life: we can always trust them because they will never fail us, never disappoint us, never change, because we understand them so thoroughly. So well do we know them that they become our advisers, our guides, and our best friends, on whom we model ourselves, our thoughts, and our actions. The writer who has succeeded in drawing to the life, true, clear, distinct, so that all may understand, a single figure of a true man or woman, has added another exemplar or warning to humanity. Nothing, then, it must be insisted upon as of the greatest importance, should be begun in writing until the characters are so clear and distinct in the brain, so well known, that they will act their parts, bend their dialog, and suit their action to whatever situation they may find themselves in, if only they are becoming to them. Of course, clear outline drawing is best when it is accomplished in the fewest strokes, and the greater part of the figures in Fiction, wherein it differs from Painting, in which everything should be finished, require no more work upon them, in order to make them clear, than half-a-dozen bold, intelligible lines.

As for the methods of conveying a clear understanding of a character, they are many. The first and the easiest is to make it clear by reason of some mannerism or personal peculiarity, some trick of speech or of carriage. This is the worst, as may generally

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be said of the easiest way. Another easy method is to describe your character at length. This also is a bad, because a tedious, method. If, however, you read a page or two of any good writer, you will discover that he first makes a character intelligible by a few words, and then allows him to reveal himself in action and dialog. On the other hand, nothing is more inartistic than to be constantly calling attention in a dialog to a gesture or a look, to laughter or to tears. The situation generally requires no such explanation: in some well-known scenes which I could quote, there is not a single word—to emphasize or explain the attitude, manner, and look of the speakers, yet they are as intelligible as if they were written down and described. That is the highest art which carries the reader along and makes him see, without being told, the changing expressions, the gestures of the speakers, and hear the varying tones of their voices. It is as if one should close one's eyes at the theater, and yet continue to see the actors on the stage as well as hear their voices. The only writer who can do this is he who makes his characters intelligible from the very outset, causes them first to stand before the reader in clear outline, and then with every additional line brings out the figure, fills up the face, and makes his creatures grow from the simple outline more and more to the perfect and rounded figure.

Clearness of drawing, which includes clear-

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ness of vision, also assists in producing directness of purpose. As soon as the actors in the story become real in the mind of the narrator, and not before, the story itself becomes real to him. More than this, he becomes straightway vehemently impelled to tell it, and he is moved to tell it in the best and most direct way, the most dramatic way, the most truthful way possible to him. It is, in fact, only when the writer believes his own story, and knows it to be every word true, and feels that he has somehow learned from every one concerned the secret history of his own part in it, that he can really begin to write it.* We know how sometimes, even from a practised hand, there comes a work marred with the fatal defect that the writer does not believe in his own story. When this is the case, one may generally find on

* Hardly anything is more important than this—to believe in your own story. Wherefore let the student remember that unless the characters exist and move about in his brain, all separate, distinct, living, and perpetually engaged in the action of the story, sometimes at one part of it, sometimes at another, and that in scenes and places which must be omitted in the writing, he has got no story to tell and had better give it up. I do not think it is generally understood that there are thousands of scenes which belong to the story and never get outside the writer's brain at all. Some of these may be very beautiful and touching; but there is not room for all, and the writer has to select.

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investigation that one cause at least of the failure is that the characters, or some of them, are blurred and uncertain.

Again, the modern English novel, whatever form it takes, almost always starts with a conscious moral purpose. When it does not, so much are we accustomed to expect it, that one feels as if there has been a debasement of the Art. It is, fortunately, not possible in this country for any man to defile and defame humanity and still be called an artist; the development of modern sympathy, the growing reverence for the individual, the ever-widening love of things beautiful and the appreciation of lives made beautiful by devotion and self-denial, the sense of personal responsibility among the English-speaking races, the deep-seated religion of our people, even in a time of doubt, are all forces which act strongly upon the artist as well as upon his readers, and lend to his work, whether he will or not, a moral purpose so clearly marked that it has become practically a law of English Fiction. We must acknowledge that this is a truly admirable thing, and a great cause for congratulation. At the same time, one may be permitted to think that the preaching novel is the least desirable of any, and to be unfeignedly rejoiced that the old religious novel, written in the interests of High Church or Low Church or any other Church, has gone out of fashion.

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Next, just as in Painting and Sculpture, not only are fidelity, truth, and harmony to be observed in Fiction, but also beauty of workmanship. It is almost impossible to estimate too highly the value of careful workmanship, that is, of style. Every one, without exception, of the great Masters in Fiction, has recognized this truth. You will hardly find a single page in any of them which is not carefully and even elaborately worked up. I think there is no point on which critics of novels should place greater importance than this, because it is one which young novelists are so very liable to ignore. There ought not to be in a novel, any more than in a poem, a single sentence carelessly worded, a single phrase which has not been considered. Consider, if you please, any one of the great scenes in Fiction—how much of the effect is due to the style, the balanced sentences, the very words used by the narrator! This, however, is only one more point of similarity between Fiction and the sister Arts. There is, I know, the danger of attaching too much attention to style at the expense of situation, and so falling a prey to priggishness, fashions, and mannerisms of the day. It is certainly a danger; at the same time, it sometimes seems, when one reads the slipshod, careless English which is often thought good enough for story-telling, that it is almost impossible to overrate the value of style. There is comfort in the thought that

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no reputation worth having can be made without attending to style, and that there is no style, however rugged, which can not be made beautiful by attention and pains. "How many times," a writer once asked a girl who brought him her first effort for advice and criticism; "how many times have you rewritten this page?" She confessed that she had written it once for all, had never read it afterwards, and had not the least idea that there was such a thing as style. Is it not presumptuous in the highest degree to believe that what one has produced without pains, thought, or trouble will give any pleasure to the reader?

In fact every scene, however unimportant, should be completely and carefully finished. There should be no unfinished places, no signs anywhere of weariness or haste—in fact, no scamping. The writer must so love his work as to dwell tenderly on every page and be literally unable to send forth a single page of it without the finishing touches. We all of us remember that kind of novel in which every scene has the appearance of being hurried and scamped.

To sum up these few preliminary and general laws. The Art of Fiction requires first of all the power of description, truth, and fidelity, observation, selection, clearness of conception and of outline, dramatic grouping, directness of purpose, a profound belief on the part of the story-teller in the reality of

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his story, and beauty of workmanship. It is, moreover, an Art which requires of those who follow it seriously that they must be unceasingly occupied in studying the ways of mankind, the social laws, the religions, philosophies, tendencies, thoughts, prejudices, superstitions of men and women. They must consider as many of the forces which act upon classes and upon individuals as they can discover; they should be always trying to put themselves into the place of another; they must be as inquisitive and as watchful as a detective, as suspicious as a criminal lawyer, as eager for knowledge as a physicist, and withal fully possessed of that spirit to which nothing appears mean, nothing contemptible, nothing unworthy of study, which belongs to human nature.

I repeat that I submit some of these laws as perhaps self-evident. If that is so, many novels which are daily submitted to the reviewer are written in wilful neglect and disobedience of them. But they are not really self-evident; those who aspire to be artists in Fiction almost invariably begin without any understanding at all of these laws. Hence the lamentable early failures, the waste of good material, and the low level of Art with which both the novel-writer and the novel-reader are too often contented. I am certain that if these laws were better known and more generally studied, a very large proportion of the bad works of which our critics

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complain would not be produced at all. And I am in great hopes that one effect of the establishment of the newly founded Society of Authors will be to keep young writers of fiction from rushing too hastily into print, to help them to the right understanding of their Art and its principles, and to guide them into true practise of their principles while they are still young, their imaginations strong, and their personal experiences as yet not wasted in foolish failures.

After all these preliminary studies there comes the most important point of all—the story. There is a school which pretends that there is no need for a story: all the stories, they say, have been told already; there is no more room for invention: nobody wants any longer to listen to a story. One hears this kind of talk with the same wonder which one feels when a new monstrous fashion changes the beautiful figure of woman into something grotesque and unnatural. Men say these things gravely to each other, especially men who have no story to tell: other men listen gravely; in the same way women put on the newest and most preposterous fashions gravely, and look upon each other without either laughing or hiding their faces for shame. It is, indeed, if we think of it, a most strange and wonderful theory, that we should continue to care for Fiction and cease to care for the story. We have all along been training ourselves how to tell the story, and

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here is this new school which steps in, like the needy knife-grinder, to explain that there is no story left at all to tell. Why, the story is everything. I can not conceive of a world going on at all without stories, and those strong ones, with incident in them, and merriment and pathos, laughter and tears, and the excitement of wondering what will happen next. Fortunately, these new theorists contradict themselves, because they find it impossible to write a novel which shall not contain a story, altho it may be but a puny bantling. Fiction without adventure—a drama without a plot—a novel without surprizes—the thing is as impossible as life without uncertainty.*

As for the story, then. And here theory and teaching can go no farther. For every Art there is the corresponding science which may be taught. We have been speaking of the corresponding science. But the Art itself can neither be taught nor communicated. If the thing is in a man he will bring it out somehow, well or badly, quickly or slowly. If it is not, he can never learn it. Here, then, let us suppose that we have to do with the man to whom the invention of stories is

* A correspondent asks me if I do not like the work of Mr. Howells. Of course one can not choose but like his writing. But one can not also avoid comparing his work with that of his countryman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, who added to the charm of style the interest of romantic and exciting story.

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part of his nature. We will also suppose that he has mastered the laws of his Art, and is now anxious to apply them. To such a man one can only recommend that he should with the greatest care and attention analyze and examine the construction of certain works, which are acknowledged to be of the first rank in fiction. Among them, not to speak of Scott, he might pay especial attention, from the construction point of view, to the truly admirable shorter stories of Charles Reade, to George Eliot's "Silas Marner," the most *perfect* of English novels, Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," Holmes's "Elsie Venner," Blackmore's "Lorna Doone," or Black's "Daughter of Heth." He must not sit down to read them "for the story," as uncritical people say: he must read them slowly and carefully, perhaps backwards, so as to discover for himself how the author built up the novel, and from what original germ or conception it sprang. Let me take another novel by another writer to illustrate my meaning. It is James Payn's "Confidential Agent," a work showing, if I may be permitted to say so, constructive power of the very highest order. You have all, without doubt, read that story. As you know, it turns upon a diamond robbery. To the unpractised hand it would seem as if stories of theft had already been told *ad nauseam*. The man of experience knows better: he knows that in his hands every story becomes new, because he can

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place it upon his stage with new incidents, new conditions, and new actors. Accordingly, Payn connects his diamonds with three or four quite ordinary families: he does not search for strange and eccentric characters, but uses the folk he sees around him, plain middle-class people, to whom most of us belong. He does not try to show these people cleverer, better cultured, or in any respect at all other than they really are, except that some of them talk a little better than in real life they would be likely to do. That is to say, in dialog he exercises the art of selection. Presently, in this quiet household of age and youth, love and happiness, there happens a dreadful thing: the young husband vanishes amid circumstances which give rise to the most horrible suspicions. How this event acts upon the minds of the household and their friends: how the faith, sorely tried, of one breaks down, and that of another remains stedfast: how the truth is gradually disclosed, and the innocence of the suspected man is made clear—all this should be carefully examined by the student as a lesson in construction and machinery. He will not, one hopes, neglect the other lesson taught him by this novel, which is the art of telling the story, selecting the actors, and skilfully using the plain and simple materials which lie around us everywhere ready to our hands. I am quite sure that the chief lesson to be learned from the study of nearly

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all our own modern novelists is that adventure, pathos, amusement, and interest, are far better sought among lives which seem dull, and among people who seem at first beyond the reach of romance, than from eccentricity and peculiarity of manner, or from violent and extreme reverses and accidents of fortune. This is, indeed, only another aspect of the increased value which we have learned to attach to individual life.

One thing more the Art student has to learn. Let him not only believe his own story before he begins to tell it, but let him remember that in story-telling, as in almsgiving, a cheerful countenance works wonders, and a hearty manner greatly helps the teller and pleases the listener. One would not have the novelist make continual efforts at being comic; but let him not tell his story with eyes full of sadness, a face of wo and a shaking voice. His story may be tragic, but continued gloom is a mistake in Art, even for a tragedy. If his story is a comedy, all the more reason to tell it cheerfully and brightly. Lastly, let him tell it without apparent effort: without trying to show his cleverness, his wit, his powers of epigram, and his learning. Yet let him pour without stint or measure into his work all that he knows, all that he has seen, all that he has observed, and all that he has remembered: all that there is of nobility, sympathy, and enthusiasm in himself. Let him spare nothing, but lavish all that

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he has, in the full confidence that the wells will not be dried up, and that the springs of fancy and imagination will flow again, even tho he seem to have exhausted himself in this one effort.

Here, therefore, we may leave the student of this Art. It remains for him to show whether he does wisely in following it farther. Of one thing for his encouragement he may rest assured; in the Art of Fiction more than in any other it is easy to gain recognition, far easier than in any of the sister Arts. In Fiction the whole of the English-speaking race are always eager to welcome a newcomer; good work is instantly recognized, and the only danger is that the universal cry for more may lead to hasty and immature production. I do not mean that ready recognition will immediately bring with it a great pecuniary success. Unfortunately, there has grown up of late a bad fashion of measuring success too much by the money it seems to command. It is not always, remember, the voice of the people which elects the best man, and tho in most cases it follows that a successful novelist commands a large sale of his works, it may happen that the Art of a great writer is of such a kind that it may never become widely popular. There have been among us two or three such writers. One case will immediately occur to most of us here. It is that of a man whose books are filled with wisdom, experience, and epigram:

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whose characters are most admirably studied from the life, whose plots are ingenious, situations fresh, and dialogs extraordinarily clever. Yet he has never been widely popular, and, I am sure, never will be. One may be pretty certain that this writer's money-value in the market is considerably less than that of many another whose genius is not half so great, but his popularity twice as large. So that a failure to hit the popular taste does not always imply failure in Art. How, then, is one to know, when people do not ask for his work, if he has really failed or not? I think he must know without being told if he has failed to please. If a man sings a song he can tell in a moment, even before he has finished, if he has pleased his audience. So, if a man writes a novel, he can tell by the criticisms in the journals, by reading between the lines of what his friends tell him, by the expression of their eyes, by his own inner consciousness, if he has succeeded or failed. And if the latter, let him find out as quickly as may be through what causes. The unlucky dramatist can complain that his piece was badly mounted and badly acted. The novelist can not, because he is sure not to be badly read. Therefore, if a novelist fail at first, let him be well assured that it is his own fault; and if, on his second attempt, he can not amend, let him for the future be silent. One is more and more astonished at seeing the repeated efforts of

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writers whose friends should make them understand that they have not the least chance of success unless they unlearn all that they have learned and begin again upon entirely different methods and some knowledge of the science. It must be a cruel blow, after all the work that goes to make even a bad novel, after all the trouble of getting it published, to see it drop unnoticed, stillborn, thought hardly worthy to receive words of contempt. If the disappointment leads to examination and self-amendment, it may prove the greatest blessing. But he who fails twice probably deserves to fail, because he has learned nothing, and is incapable of learning anything, from the lessons of his first failure.

Let me say one word upon the present condition of this most delightful Art in England. Remember that great Masters in every Art are rare. Perhaps one or two appear in a century: we ought not to expect more. It may even happen that those modern writers of our own whom we have agreed to call great Masters will have to take lower rank among posterity, who will have great Masters of their own. I am inclined, however, to think that a few of the nineteenth-century novelists will never be suffered to die, tho they may be remembered principally for one book—that Thackeray will be remembered for his "Vanity Fair," Dickens for "David Copperfield," George Meredith for the "Ordeal of Richard Feverel," George Eliot for

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"Silas Marner," Charles Reade for the "Cloister and the Hearth," and Blackmore for his "Lorna Doone." On the other hand, without thinking for troubling ourselves at all about the verdict of posterity, which matters nothing to us compared with the verdict of our contemporaries, let us acknowledge that it is a bad year indeed when we have not produced some good work, work of a very high kind, if not immortal work.

An exhibition of the year's novels would generally show two or three, at least, of which the country may be, say, reasonably proud. Does the Royal Academy of Arts show every year more than two or three pictures—not immortal pictures, but pictures of which we may be reasonably proud? One would like, it is true, to see fewer bad novels published, as well as fewer bad pictures exhibited; the standard of the work which is on the borderland between success and failure should be higher. At the same time I am very sure and certain that there never has been a time when better works of Fiction have been produced, both by men and women. That Art is not declining, but is advancing, which is cultivated on true and not on false or conventional principles. Ought we not to be full of hope for the future, when such women as Mrs. Oliphant and Mrs. Thackeray Ritchie write for us—when such men as Meredith, Blackmore, Black, Payn, Wilkie Collins, and Hardy are still at their best, and

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such men as Louis Stevenson, Christie Murray, Clark Russell, and Herman Merivale have just begun? I think the fiction, and, indeed, all the imaginary work of the future will be far fuller in human interest than in the past; the old stories—no doubt they will still be the old stories—will be fitted to actors who up till recently were only used for the purposes of contrast; the drama of life which formerly was assigned to kings and princes will be played by figures taken as much from the great struggling, unknown masses. Kings and great lords are chiefly picturesque and interesting on account of their beautiful costumes, and a traditional belief in their power. Costume is certainly not a strong point in the lower ranks, but I think we shall not miss that, and wherever we go for our material, whether to the higher or the lower ranks, we may be sure of finding everywhere love, sacrifice, and devotion for virtues, with selfishness, cunning, and treachery for vices. Out of these, with their endless combinations and changes, that novelist must be poor indeed who can not make a story.

Lastly, I said at the outset that I would ask you to accord to novelists the recognition of their place as artists. But after what has been said, I feel that to urge this further would be only a repetition of what has gone before. Therefore, tho not all who write novels can reach the first, or even the second.

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rank, wherever you find good and faithful work, with truth, sympathy, and clearness of purpose, I pray you to give the author of that work the praise as to an Artist—an Artist like the rest—the praise that you so readily accord to the earnest student of any other Art. As for the great Masters of the Art—Fielding, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Victor Hugo—I, for one, feel irritated when the critics begin to appraise, compare, and to estimate them: there is nothing, I think, that we can give them but admiration that is unspeakable, and gratitude that is silent. This silence proves more eloquently than any words how great, how beautiful an Art is that of Fiction.

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THE LAWS OF STYLE

BY GEORGE HENRY LEWES

THERE are five laws under which all the conditions of Style may be grouped:— 1. The Law of Economy. 2. The Law of Simplicity. 3. The Law of Sequence. 4. The Law of Climax. 5. The Law of Variety.

It would be easy to reduce these five to three, and range all considerations under Economy, Climax, and Variety; or we might amplify the divisions; but there are reasons of convenience as well as symmetry which give a preference to the five. I had arranged them thus for convenience some years ago, and I now find they express the equivalence of the two great factors of Style—Intelligence and Sensibility. Two out of the five, Economy and Simplicity, more specially derive their significance from intellectual needs; another two, Climax and Variety, from emotional needs; and between these is the Law of Sequence, which is intermediate in its nature, and may be claimed with equal justice by both. The laws of force and the laws of pleasure can only be provisionally isolated in our inquiry; in style they are blended. The following brief estimate of

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each considers it as an isolated principle undetermined by any other.

1. *The Law of Economy.*—Our inquiry is scientific, not empirical; it therefore seeks the psychological basis for every law, endeavoring to ascertain what condition of a reader's receptivity determines the law. Fortunately for us, in the case of the first and most important law the psychological basis is extremely simple, and may be easily appreciated by a reference to its analog in Mechanics.

What is the first object of a machine? Effective work—*vis viva.* Every means by which friction can be reduced, and the force thus economized be rendered available, necessarily solicits the constructor's care. He seeks as far as possible to liberate the motion which is absorbed in the working of the machine, and to use it as *vis viva.* He knows that every superfluous detail, every retarding influence, is at the cost of so much power, and is a mechanical defect tho it may perhaps be an esthetic beauty or a practical convenience. He may retain it because of the beauty, because of the convenience, but he knows the price of effective power at which it is obtained.

And thus it stands with Style. The first object of a writer is effective expression, the power of communicating distinct thoughts and emotional suggestions. He has to overcome the friction of ignorance and preoccupa-

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tion. He has to arrest a wandering attention, and to clear away the misconceptions which cling around verbal symbols. Words are not like iron and wood, coal and water, invariable in their properties, calculable in their effects. They are mutable in their powers, deriving force and subtle variations of force from very trifling changes of position; coloring and colored by the words which precede and succeed; significant or insignificant from the powers of rhythm and cadence. It is the writer's art so to arrange words that they shall suffer the least possible retardation from the inevitable friction of the reader's mind. The analogy of a machine is perfect. In both cases the object is to secure the maximum of disposable force, by diminishing the amount absorbed in the working. Obviously, if a reader is engaged in extricating the meaning from a sentence which ought to have reflected its meaning as in a mirror, the mental energy thus employed is abstracted from the amount of force which he has to bestow on the subject; he has mentally to form anew the sentence which has been clumsily formed by the writer; he wastes, on interpretation of the symbols, force which might have been concentrated on meditation of the propositions. This waste is inappreciable in writing of ordinary excellence, and on subjects not severely tasking to the attention; but if inappreciable, it is always waste; and in bad writing, es-

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pecially on topics of philosophy and science, the waste is important. And it is this which greatly narrows the circle for serious works. Interest in the subjects treated may not be wanting; but the abundant energy is wanting which to the fatigue of consecutive thinking will add the labor of deciphering the language. Many of us are but too familiar with the fatigue of reconstructing unwieldy sentences in which the clauses are not logically dependent, nor the terms free from equivoke; we know what it is to have to hunt for the meaning hidden in a maze of words; and we can understand the yawning indifference which must soon settle upon every reader of such writing, unless he has some strong external impulse or abundant energy.

Economy dictates that the meaning should be presented in a form which claims the least possible attention to itself as form, unless when that form is part of the writer's object, and when the simple thought is less important than the manner of presenting it. And even when the manner is playful or impassioned, the law of Economy still presides, and insists on the rejection of whatever is superfluous. Only a delicate susceptibility can discriminate a superfluity in passages of humor or rhetoric; but elsewhere a very ordinary understanding can recognize the clauses and the epithets which are out of place, and in excess, retarding or confusing the direct appreciation of the thought. If

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we have written a clumsy or confused sentence, we shall often find that the removal of an awkward inversion liberates the idea, or that the modification of a cadence increases the effect. This is sometimes strikingly seen at the rehearsal of a play: a passage which has fallen flat upon the ear is suddenly brightened into effectiveness by the removal of a superfluous phrase, which, by its retarding influence, had thwarted the declamatory crescendo.

Young writers may learn something of the secrets of Economy by careful revision of their own compositions, and by careful dissection of passages selected both from good and bad writers. They have simply to strike out every word, every clause, and every sentence, the removal of which will not carry away any of the constituent elements of the thought. Having done this, let them compare the revised with the unrevised passages, and see where the excision has improved, and where it has injured, the effect. For Economy, altho a primal law, is not the only law of Style. It is subject to various limitations from the pressure of other laws; and thus the removal of a trifling superfluity will not be justified by a wise economy if that loss entails a dissonance, or prevents a climax, or robs the expression of its ease and variety. Economy is rejection of whatever is superfluous; it is not Miserliness. A liberal expenditure is often the best economy, and is

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always so when dictated by a generous impulse, not by a prodigal carelessness or ostentatious vanity. That man would greatly err who tried to make his style effective by stripping it of all redundancy and ornament, presenting it naked before the indifferent public. Perhaps the very redundancy which he lops away might have aided the reader to see the thought more clearly, because it would have kept the thought a little longer before his mind, and thus prevented him from hurrying on to the next while this one was still imperfectly conceived.

As a general rule, redundancy is injurious; and the reason of the rule will enable us to discriminate when redundancy is injurious and when beneficial. It is injurious when it hampers the rapid movement of the reader's mind, diverting his attention to some collateral detail. But it is beneficial when its retarding influence is such as only to detain the mind longer on the thought, and thus to secure the fuller effect of the thought. For rapid reading is often imperfect reading. The mind is satisfied with a glimpse of that which it ought to have steadily contemplated; and any artifice by which the thought can be kept long enough before the mind may indeed be a redundancy as regards the meaning, but is an economy of power. Thus we see that the phrase or the clause which we might be tempted to lop away because it threw no light upon the proposi-

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tion, would be retained by a skilful writer because it added power. You may know the character of a redundancy by this one test: does it divert the attention, or simply retard it? The former is always a loss of power; the latter is sometimes a gain of power. The art of the writer consists in rejecting all redundancies that do not conduce to clearness. The shortest sentences are not necessarily the clearest. Concision gives energy, but it also adds restraint. The labor of expanding a terse sentence to its full meaning is often greater than the labor of picking out the meaning from a diffuse and loitering passage. Tacitus is more tiresome than Cicero.

There are occasions when the simplest and fewest words surpass in effect all the wealth of rhetorical amplification. An example may be seen in the passage which has been a favorite illustration from the days of Longinus to our own. "God said: Let there be light! and there was light." There is a conception of power so calm and simple that it needs only to be presented in the fewest and the plainest words, and would be confused or weakened by any suggestion of accessories. Let us amplify the expressions in the redundant style of miscalled eloquent writers: "God, in the magnificent fulness of creative energy, exclaimed: Let there be light! and lo! the agitating fiat immediately went forth, and thus in one indivisible moment the whole

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universe was illumined." We have here a sentence which I am certain many a writer would, in secret, prefer to the masterly plainness of Genesis. It is not a sentence which would have captivated critics.

Altho this sentence from Genesis is sublime in its simplicity, we are not to conclude that simple sentences are uniformly the best, or that a style composed of propositions briefly expressed would obey a wise Economy. The reader's pleasure must not be forgotten; and he can not be pleased by a style which always leaps and never flows. A harsh, abrupt, and dislocated manner irritates and perplexes him by its sudden jerks. It is easier to write short sentences than to read them. An easy, fluent, and harmonious phrase steals unobtrusively upon the mind, and allows the thought to expand quietly like an opening flower. But the very suasiveness of harmonious writing needs to be varied lest it become a drowsy monotony; and the sharp, short sentences which are intolerable when abundant, when used sparingly act like a trumpet-call to the drooping attention.

2. *The Law of Simplicity.*—The first obligation of Economy is that of using the fewest words to secure the fullest effect. It rejects whatever is superfluous; but the question of superfluity must, as I showed just now, be determined in each individual case by various conditions too complex and numerous to be reduced within a formula. The same may

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be said of Simplicity, which is indeed so intimately allied with Economy that I have only given it a separate station for purposes of convenience. The psychological basis is the same for both. The desire for simplicity is impatience at superfluity, and the impatience arises from a sense of hindrance.

The first obligation of Simplicity is that of using the simplest means to secure the fullest effect. But altho the mind instinctively rejects all needless complexity, we shall greatly err if we fail to recognize the fact that what the mind recoils from is not the complexity, but the needlessness. When two men are set to the work of one, there is a waste of means; when two phrases are used to express one meaning twice, there is a waste of power; when incidents are multiplied and illustrations crowded without increase of illumination, there is prodigality which only the vulgar can mistake for opulence. Simplicity is a relative term. If in sketching the head of a man the artist wishes only to convey the general characteristics of that head, the fewest touches show the greatest power, selecting as they do only those details which carry with them characteristic significance. The means are simple, as the effect is simple. But if, besides the general characteristics, he wishes to convey the modeling of the forms, the play of light and shade, the textures, and the very complex effect of a human head, he must use more complex means.

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The simplicity which was adequate in the one case becomes totally inadequate in the other.

Obvious as this is, it has not been sufficiently present to the mind of critics who have called for plain familiar, and concrete diction, as if that alone could claim to be simple; who have demanded a style unadorned by the artifices of involution, cadence, imagery, and epigram, as if Simplicity were incompatible with these; and have praised meagerness, mistaking it for Simplicity. Saxon words are words which in their homeliness have deep-seated power, and in some places they are the simplest because the most powerful words we can employ; but their very homeliness excludes them from certain places where their very power of suggestion is a disturbance of the general effect. The selective instinct of the artist tells him when his language should be homely, and when it should be more elevated; and it is precisely in the imperceptible blending of the plain with the ornate that a great writer is distinguished. He uses the simplest phrases without triviality, and the grandest without a suggestion of grandiloquence.

Simplicity of Style will therefore be understood as meaning absence of needless superfluity:

"Without o'erflowing full."

Its plainness is never meagerness, but unity.

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Obedient to the primary impulse of *adequate* expression, the style of a complex subject should be complex; of a technical subject, technical; of an abstract subject, abstract; of a familiar subject, familiar; of a pictorial subject, picturesque. The structure of the "Antigone" is simple; but so also is the structure of "Othello," tho it contains many more elements; the simplicity of both lies in their fulness without superfluity.

Whatever is outside the purpose, or the feeling, of a scene, a speech, a sentence, or a phrase, whatever may be omitted without sacrifice of effect, is a sin against this law. I do not say that the incident, description, or dialog, which may be omitted without injury to the unity of the work, is necessarily a sin against art; still less that, even when acknowledged as a sin, it may not sometimes be condoned by its success. The law of Simplicity is not the only law of art; and, moreover, audiences are, unhappily, so little accustomed to judge works as wholes, and so ready to seize upon any detail which pleases them, no matter how incongruously the detail may be placed, that a felicitous fault will captivate applause, let critics shake reproving heads as they may. Nevertheless the law of Simplicity remains unshaken, and ought only to give way to the pressure of the law of Variety.

The drama offers a good opportunity for studying the operation of this law, because

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the limitations of time compel the dramatist to attend closely to what is and what is not needful for his purpose. A drama must compress into two or three hours material which may be diffused through three volumes of a novel, because spectators are more impatient than readers, and more unequivocally resent by their signs of weariness any disregard of economy, which in the novel may be skipped. The dramatist having little time in which to evolve his story, feels that every scene which does not forward the progress of the action or intensify the interest in the characters is an artistic defect; tho in itself it may be charmingly written, and may excite applause, it is away from his immediate purpose. And what is true of purposeless scenes and characters which divert the current of progress, is equally true, in a minor degree, of speeches and sentences which arrest the culminating interest by calling attention away to other objects. It is an error which arises from a deficient earnestness on the writer's part, or from a too pliant facility. The *dramatis personæ* wander in their dialog, not swayed by the fluctuations of feeling, but by the author's desire to show his wit and wisdom, or else by his want of power to control the vagrant suggestions of his fancy. The desire for display and the inability to control are weaknesses that lead to almost every transgression of Simplicity; but sometimes the transgressions are made in more or less conscious obe-

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dience to the law of Variety, altho the highest reach of art is to secure variety by an opulent simplicity.

The novelist is not under the same limitations of time, nor has he to contend against the same mental impatience on the part of his public. He may therefore linger where the dramatist must hurry; he may digress, and gain fresh impetus from the digression, where the dramatist would seriously endanger the effect of his scene by retarding its evolution. The novelist with a prudent prodigality may employ descriptions, dialogs, and episodes which would be fatal in a drama. Characters may be introduced and dismissed without having any important connection with the plot; it is enough if they serve the purpose of the chapter in which they appear. Altho as a matter of fine art no character should have a place in a novel unless it form an integral element of the story, and no episode should be introduced unless it reflects some strong light on the characters or incidents, this is a critical demand which only fine artists think of satisfying, and only delicate tastes appreciate. For the mass of readers it is enough if they are amused; and indeed all readers, no matter how critical their taste, would rather be pleased by a transgression of the law than wearied by prescription. Delight condones offense. The only question for the writer is, whether the offense is so trivial as to be submerged in

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the delight. And he will do well to remember that the greater flexibility belonging to the novel by no means removes the novel from the laws which rule the drama. The parts of a novel should have organic relations. Push the licence to excess, and stitch together a volume of unrelated chapters—a patchwork of descriptions, dialogs, and incidents,—no one will call that a novel; and the less the work has of this unorganized character the greater will be its value, not only in the eyes of critics, but in its effect on the emotions of the reader.

Simplicity of structure means organic unity, whether the organism be simple or complex; and hence in all times the emphasis which critics have laid upon Simplicity, tho they have not unfrequently confounded it with narrowness of range. In like manner, as we said just now, when treating of diction they have overlooked the fact that the simplest must be that which best expresses the thought. Simplicity of diction is integrity of speech; that which admits of least equivocation, that which by the clearest verbal symbols most readily calls up in the reader's mind the images and feelings which the writer wishes to call up. Such diction may be concrete or abstract, familiar or technical; its simplicity is determined by the nature of the thought. We shall often be simpler in using abstract and technical terms than in using concrete and familiar terms which by their

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very concretness and familiarity call up images and feelings foreign to our immediate purpose. If we desire the attention to fall upon some general idea we only blur its outlines by using words that call up particulars. Thus, altho it may be needful to give some definite direction to the reader's thoughts by the suggestion of a particular fact, we must be careful not to arrest his attention on the fact iself, still less to divert it by calling up vivid images of facts unrelated to our present purpose. For example, I wish to fix in the reader's mind a conception of a lonely, meditative man walking on the seashore, and I fall into the vicious style of our day which is lauded as word-painting, and write something like this:—

"The firshermen mending their storm-beaten boats upon the shore would lay down the hammer to gaze after him as he passed abstractedly before their huts, his hair streaming in the salt breeze, his feet crushing the scattered seaweed, his eyes dreamily fixed upon the purple heights of the precipitous crags."

Now it is obvious that the details here assembled are mostly foreign to my purpose, which has nothing whatever to do with fishermen, storms, boats, seaweeds, or purple crags; and by calling up images of these I only divert the attention from my thought. Whereas, if it had been my purpose to picture the scene itself, or the man's delight in it,

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then the enumeration of details would give color and distinctness to the picture.

The art of a great writer is seen in the perfect fitness of his expressions. He knows how to blend vividness with vagueness, knows where images are needed, and where by their vivacity they would be obstacles to the rapid appreciation of his thought. The value of concrete illustration artfully used may be seen illustrated in a passage from Macaulay's invective against Frederic the Great: "On the head of Frederic is all the blood which was shed in a war which raged during many years and in every quarter of the globe, the blood of the column at Fontenoy, the blood of the mountaineers who were slaughtered at Culloden. The evils produced by his wickedness were felt in lands where the name of Prussia was unknown; and in order that he might rob a neighbor whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coast of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the Great Lakes of North America." Disregarding the justice or injustice of the thought, note the singular force and beauty of this passage, delightful alike to ear and mind; and observe how its very elaborateness has the effect of the finest simplicity, because the successive pictures are constituents of the general thought, and by their vividness render the conclusion more impressive. Let us suppose him to have written with the vague generality of expression much patronized by

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dignified historians, and told us that "Frederic was the cause of great European conflicts extending over long periods; and in consequence of his political aggression hideous crimes were perpetrated in the most distant parts of the globe." This absence of concrete images would not have been simplicity, inasmuch as the labor of converting the general expressions into definite meanings would thus have been thrown upon the reader.

Pictorial illustration has its dangers, as we daily see in the clumsy imitators of Macaulay, who have not the fine instinct of style, but obey the vulgar instinct of display, and imagine they can produce a brilliant effect by the use of strong lights, whereas they distract the attention with images alien to the general impression, just as crude colorists vex the eye with importunate splendors. Nay, even good writers sometimes sacrifice the large effect of a diffusive light to the small effect of a brilliant point. This is a defect of taste frequently noticeable in two very good writers, De Quincey and Ruskin, whose command of expression is so varied that it tempts them into *fioritura* as flexibility of voice tempts singers to sin against simplicity. At the close of an eloquent passage De Quincey writes:—

"Gravitation, again, that works without holiday for every, and searches every corner of the universe, what intellect can follow it to its fountain? And yet, shyer than

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gravitation, less to be counted than the fluxions of sun-dials, stealthier than the growth of a forest, are the footsteps of Christianity amongst the political workings of man.''

The association of holidays and shyness with an idea so abstract as that of gravitation, the use of the learned word fluxions to express the movements of the shadows on a dial, and the discordant suggestion of stealthiness applied to vegetable growth and Christianity, are so many offenses against simplicity. Let the passage be contrasted with one in which wealth of imagery is in accordance with the thought it expresses:—

''In the edifices of Man there should be found reverent worship and following, not only of the spirit which rounds the pillars of the forest, and arches the vault of the avenue—which gives veining to the leaf and polish to the shell, and grace to every pulse that agitates animal organization—but of that also which reproves the pillars of the earth, and builds up her barren precipices into the coldness of the clouds, and lifts her shadowy cones of mountain purple into the pale arch of the sky; for these, and other glories more than these, refuse not to connect themselves, in his thoughts, with the work of his own hand; the gray cliff loses not its nobleness when it reminds us of some Cyclopean waste of mural stone; the pinnacles of the rocky promontory arrange themselves, undegraded, into fantastic semblances

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of fortress towers, and even the awful cone of the far-off mountain has a melancholy mixed with that of its own solitude, which is cast from the images of nameless tumuli on white seashores, and of the heaps of reedy clay, into which chambered cities melt in their mortality."

I shall notice but two points in this singularly beautiful passage. The one is the exquisite instinct of Sequence in several of the phrases, not only as to harmony, but as to the evolution of the meaning, especially in "builds up her barren precipices into the coldness of the clouds, and lifts her shadowy cones of mountain purple into the pale arch of the sky." The other is the injurious effect of three words in the sentence, "for these, and other glories more than these, *refuse not to* connect themselves in his thoughts." Strike out the words printed in italics, and you not only improve the harmony, but free the sentence from a disturbing use of what Ruskin has named the "pathetic fallacy." There are times in which Nature may be assumed as in sympathy with our moods; and at such times the pathetic fallacy is a source of subtle effect. But in the passage just quoted the introduction seems to me a mistake: the simplicity of the thought is disturbed by this hint of an active participation of Nature in man's feelings; it is preserved in its integrity by the omission of that hint.

These illustrations will suffice to show how

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the law we are considering will command and forbid the use of concrete expressions and vivid imagery according to the purpose of the writer. A fine taste guided by Sincerity will determine that use. Nothing more than a general rule can be laid down. Eloquence, as I said before, can not spring from the simple desire to be eloquent; the desire usually leads to grandiloquence. But Sincerity will save us. We have but to remember Montesquieu's advice: "Il faut prendre garde aux grandes phrases dans les humbles sujets; elles produisent l'effet d'une masque à barbe blanche sur la joue d'un enfant." This translated means that "One must guard against grandiose phrases when treating simple subjects; they produce the effect of a white-bearded mask on the cheek of a child."

Here another warning may be placed. In our anxiety, lest we err on the side of grandiloquence, we may perhaps fall into the opposite error of tameness. Sincerity will save us here also. Let us but express the thought and feeling actually in our minds, then our very grandiloquence (if that is our weakness) will have a certain movement and vivacity not without effect, and our tameness (if we are tame) will have a gentleness not without its charm.

Finally, let us banish from our critical superstitions the notion that chastity of composition, or simplicity of Style, is in any respect allied to timidity. There are two kinds

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of timidity, or rather it has two different origins, both of which cripple the free movement of thought. The one is the timidity of fastidiousness, the other of placid stupidity: the one shrinks from originality lest it should be regarded as impertinent; the other lest, being new, it should be wrong. We detect the one in the sensitive discreetness of the style. We detect the other in the complacency of its platitudes and the stereotyped commonness of its metaphors. The writer who is afraid of originality feels himself in deep water when he launches into a commonplace. For him who is timid because weak, there is no advice, except suggesting the propriety of silence. For him who is timid because fastidious, there is this advice: get rid of the superstition about chastity, and recognize the truth that a style may be simple, even if it move among abstractions, or employ few Saxon words, or abound in concrete images and novel turns of expression.

3. *The Law of Sequence.*—Much that might be included under this head would equally well find its place under that of Economy or that of Climax. Indeed it is obvious that to secure perfect Economy there must be that sequence of the words which will present the least obstacle to the unfolding of the thought, and that Climax is only attainable through a properly graduated sequence. But there is another element we have to take into account, and that is the rhythmical effect of

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Style. Mr. Herbert Spencer in his essay very clearly states the law of Sequence, but I infer that he would include it entirely under the law of Economy; at any rate he treats of it solely in reference to intelligibility, and not at all in its scarcely less important relation to harmony. "We have *a priori* reasons," he says, "for believing that in every sentence there is some one order of words more effective than any other; and that this order is the one which presents the elements of the proposition in the succession in which they may be most readily put together. As in a narrative, the events should be stated in such sequence that the mind may not have to go backwards and forwards in order to rightly connect them; as in a group of sentences, the arrangement should be such that each of them may be understood when it comes, without waiting for subsequent ones; so in every sentence, the sequence of words should be that which suggests the constituents of the thought in the order most convenient for the building up of that thought."

But Style appeals to the emotions as well as to the intellect, and the arrangement of words and sentences which will be the most economical may not be the most musical, and the most musical may not be the most pleasurably effective. For Climax and Variety it may be necessary to sacrifice something of rapid intelligibility: hence involutions, antitheses, and suspensions, which disturb the

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most orderly arrangement, may yet, in virtue of their own subtle influences, be counted as improvements on that arrangement.

Tested by the Intellect and the Feelings, the law of Sequence is seen to be a curious compound of the two. If we isolate these elements for the purposes of exposition, we shall find that the principle of the first is much simpler and more easy of obedience than the principle of the second. It may be thus stated:—

The constituent elements of the conception expressed in the sentence and the paragraph should be arranged in strict correspondence with an inductive or deductive progression.

All exposition, like all research, is either inductive or deductive. It groups particulars so as to lead up to a general conception which embraces them all, but which could not be fully understood until they had been estimated; or else it starts from some general conception, already familiar to the mind, and as it moves along, casts its light upon numerous particulars, which are thus shown to be related to it, but which without that light would have been overlooked.

If the reader will meditate on that brief statement of the principle, he will, I think, find it explain many doubtful points. Let me merely notice one, namely, the dispute as to whether the direct or the indirect style should be preferred. Some writers insist,

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and others practise the precept without insistence, that the proposition should be stated first, and all its qualifications as well as its evidences be made to follow; others maintain that the proposition should be made to grow up step by step with all its evidences and qualifications in their due order, and the conclusion disclose itself as crowning the whole. Are not both methods right under different circumstances? If my object is to convince you of a general truth, or to impress you with a feeling, which you are not already prepared to accept, it is obvious that the most effective method is the inductive, which leads your mind upon a culminating wave of evidence or emotion to the very point I aim at. But the deductive method is best when I wish to direct the light of familiar truths and roused emotions, upon new particulars, or upon details in unsuspected relation to those truths; and when I wish the attention to be absorbed by these particulars which are of interest in themselves, not upon the general truths which are of no present interest except in as far as they light up these details. A growing thought requires the inductive exposition, an applied thought the deductive.

This principle, which is of very wide application, is subject to two important qualifications—one pressed on it by the necessities of Climax and Variety, the other by the feebleness of memory, which can not keep a

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long hold of details unless their significance is apprehended; so that a paragraph of suspended meaning should never be long, and when the necessities of the case bring together numerous particulars in evidence of the conclusion, they should be so arranged as to have culminating force: one clause leading up to another, and throwing its impetus into it, instead of being linked on to another, and dragging the mind down with its weight.

It is surprizing how few men understand that Style is a Fine Art; and how few of those who are fastidious in their diction give much care to the arrangement of their sentences, paragraphs, and chapters—in a word, to Composition. The painter distributes his masses with a view to general effect; so does the musician: writers seldom do so. Nor do they usually arrange the members of their sentences in that sequence which shall secure for each its proper emphasis and its determining influence on the others—influence reflected back and influence projected forward. As an example of the charm that lies in unostentatious antiphony, consider this passage from Ruskin:—"Originality in expression does not depend on invention of new words, nor originality in poetry on invention of new measures; nor in painting on invention of new colors or new modes of using them. The chords of music, the harmonies of color, the general principles of the arrangement of sculptural masses, have

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been determined long ago, and in all probability can not be added to any more than they can be altered.'' Men write like this by instinct; and I by no means wish to suggest that writing like this can be produced by rule. What I suggest is, that in this, as in every other Fine Art, instinct does mostly find itself in accordance with rule; and a knowledge of rules helps to direct the blind gropings of feeling, and to correct the occasional mistakes of instinct. If, after working his way through a long and involved sentence in which the meaning is rough-hewn, the writer were to try its effect upon ear and intellect, he might see its defects and reshape it into beauty and clearness. But in general men shirk this labor, partly because it is irksome, and partly because they have no distinct conception of the rules which would make the labor light.

The law of Sequence, we have seen, rests upon the two requisites of Clearness and Harmony. Men with a delicate sense of rhythm will instinctively distribute their phrases in an order that falls agreeably on the ear, without monotony, and without an echo of other voices; and men with a keen sense of logical relation will instinctively arrange their sentences in an order that best unfolds the meaning. The French are great masters of the law of Sequence, and, did space permit, I could cite many excellent examples. One brief passage from Royer Collard must suf-

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fice:—"Les faits que l'observation laisse épars et muets la causalité les rassemble, les enchaine, leur prête un langage. Chaque fait révèle celui qui a précédê, prophétise celui qui va suivre." This when translated means "The facts that knowledge allows to remain silent and scattered are brought together by a causal agency that links them and affords them speech. Each fact reveals that which preceded it—prophesies the one that is to follow."

The ear is only a guide to the harmony of a period, and often tempts us into the feebleness of expletives or approximate expressions for the sake of a cadence. Yet, on the other hand, if we disregard the subtle influences of harmonious arrangement, our thoughts lose much of the force which would otherwise result from their logical subordination. The easy evolution of thought in a melodious period, quietly taking up on its way a variety of incidental details, yet never lingering long enough over them to divert the attention or to suspend the continuous crescendo of interest, but by subtle influences of proportion allowing each clause of the sentence its separate significance, is the product of a natural gift, as rare as the gift of music, or of poetry. But until men come to understand that Style is an art, and an amazingly difficult art, they will continue with careless presumption to tumble out their sentences as they would tilt stones from a cart, trusting

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very much to accident or gravitation for the shapeliness of the result. I will write a passage which may serve as an example of what I mean, altho the defect is purposely kept within very ordinary limits:—

"To construct a sentence with many loosely and not obviously dependent clauses, each clause containing an important meaning or a concrete image the vivacity of which, like a boulder in a shallow stream, disturbs the equable current of thought,—and in such a case the more beautiful the image the greater the obstacle, so that the laws of simplicity and economy are violated by it,—while each clause really requires for its interpretation a proposition that is however kept suspended till the close,—is a defect."

The weariness produced by such writing as this is very great, and yet the recasting of the passage is easy. Thus:—

"It is a defect when a sentence is constructed with many loosely and not obviously dependent clauses, each of which requires for its interpretation a proposition that is kept suspended till the close; and this defect is exaggerated when each clause contains an important meaning, or a concrete image which, like a boulder in a shallow stream, disturbs the equable current of thought: the more beautiful the image, the greater its violation of the laws of simplicity and economy."

In this second form the sentence has no

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long suspension of the main idea, no diversions of the current. The proposition is stated and illustrated directly, and the mind of the reader follows that of the writer. How injurious it is to keep the key in your pocket until all the locks in succession have been displayed may be seen in such a sentence as this:—

"Fantoms of lost power, sudden intuitions, and shadowy restorations of forgotten feelings, sometimes dim and perplexing, sometimes by bright but furtive glimpses, sometimes by a full and steady revelation overcharged with light—throw us back in a moment upon scenes and remembrances that we have left full thirty years behind us."

Had De Quincey liberated our minds from suspense by first presenting the thought which first arose in his own mind—namely, that we are thrown back upon scenes and remembrances by fantoms of lost power, etc.,— the beauty of his language in its pregnant suggestiveness would have been felt at once. Instead of that, he makes us accompany him in darkness, and when the light appears we have to travel backward over the ground again to see what we have passed. The passage continues:—

"In solitude, and chiefly in the solitudes of nature, and, above all, amongst the great and enduring features of nature, such as mountains and quiet dells, and the lawny recesses of forests, and the silent shores of

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lakes, features with which (as being themselves less liable to change) our feelings have a more abiding association—under these circumstances it is, that such evanescent hauntings of our past and forgotten selves are more apt to startle and to waylay us."

The beauty of this passage seems to me marred by the awkward yet necessary interruption, "under these circumstances it is," which would have been avoided by opening the sentence with "such evanescent hauntings of our forgotten selves are most apt to startle us in solitudes," etc. Compare the effect of directness in the following:—

"This was one, and the most common shape of extinguished power, from which Coleridge fled to the great city. But sometimes the same decay came back upon his heart in the more poignant shape of intimations, and vanishing glimpses, recovered from one moment from the paradise of youth, and from the fields of joy and power, over which for him, too certainly, he felt that the cloud of night had settled forever."

Obedience to the law of Sequence gives strength by giving clearness and beauty of rhythm; it economizes force and creates music. A very trifling disregard of it will mar an effect. See an example both of obedience and trifling disobedience in the following passage from Ruskin:—

"People speak in this working age, when they speak from their hearts, as if houses and

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lands, and food and raiment were alone useful, and as if Sight, Thought, and Admiration were all profitless, so that men insolently call themselves Utilitarians, who would turn, if they had their way, themselves and their race into vegetables; men who think, as far as such can be said to think, that the meat is more than the life and the raiment than the body, who look to the earth as a stable and to its fruit as fodder; vinedressers and husbandmen, who love the corn they grind, and the grapes they crush, better than the gardens of the angels upon the slopes of Eden."

It is instructive to contrast the dislocated sentence, "who would turn, if they had their way, themselves and their race," with the sentence which succeeds it, "men who think, as far as such can be said to think, that the meat," etc. In the latter the parenthetic interruption is a source of power; it dams the current to increase its force: in the former the inversion is a loss of power; it is a dissonance to the ear and a diversion of the thought.

As illustrations of Sequence in composition, two passages may be quoted from Macaulay which display the power of pictorial suggestions when, instead of diverting attention from the main purpose, they are arranged with progressive and culminating effect.

"Such or nearly such was the change which passed on the Mogul empire during the forty years which followed the death of Aurung-

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zebe. A succession of nominal sovereigns, sunk in indolence and debauchery, sauntered away life in secluded palaces, chewing bang, fondling concubines, and listening to buffoons. A succession of ferocious invaders descended through the western passes, to prey on the defenseless wealth of Hindostan. A Persian conqueror crossed the Indus, marched through the gates of Delhi, and bore away in triumph those treasures of which the magnificence had astounded Roe and Bernier, the Peacock Throne, on which the richest jewels of Golconda had been disposed by the most skilful hands of Europe, and the inestimable Mountain of Light, which, after many strange vicissitudes, lately shone in the bracelet of Runjeet Sing, and is now destined to adorn the hideous idol of Orissa. The Afghan soon followed to complete the work of devastation which the Persian had begun. The warlike tribes of Rajpootana threw off the Mussulman yoke. A band of mercenary soldiers occupied Rohilcund. The Seiks ruled on the Indus. The Jauts spread dismay along the Jumnah. The high lands which border on the western seacoast of India poured forth a yet more formidable race, a race which, after many desperate and doubtful struggles, yielded only to the fortune and genius of England. It was under the reign of Aurungzebe that this wild clan of plunderers first descended from their mountains; and soon after his death, every corner of his wide

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empire learned to tremble at the mighty name of the Mahrattas. Many fertile viceroyalties were entirely subdued by them. Their dominions stretched across the peninsula from sea to sea. Mahratta captains reigned at Poonah, at Gualior, in Guzerat, in Berar, and in Tanjore."

Such prose as this affects us like poetry. The pictures and suggestions might possibly have been gathered together by any other historian; but the artful succession, the perfect sequence, could only have been found by a fine writer. I pass over a few paragraphs, and pause at this second example of a sentence simple in structure, tho complex in its elements, fed but not overfed with material, and almost perfect in its cadence and logical connection. "Scarcely any man, however sagacious, would have thought it possible that a trading company, separated from India by fifteen thousand miles of sea, and possessing in India only a few acres for purposes of commerce, would, in less than a hundred years, spread its empire from Cape Comorin to the eternal snow of the Himalayas; would compel Mahratta and Mahommedan to forget their mutual feuds in common subjection; would tame down even those wild races which had resisted the most powerful of the Moguls; and having united under its laws a hundred millions of subjects, would carry its victorious arms far to the east of the Burrampooter, and far to the

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west of the Hydaspes, dictate terms of peace at the gates of Ava, and seat its vassal on the throne of Candahar.''

Let us see the same principle exhibited in a passage at once pictorial and argumentative. ''We know more certainly every day,'' says Ruskin, ''that whatever appears to us harmful in the universe has some beneficent or necessary operation; that the storm which destroys a harvest brightens the sunbeams for harvests yet unsown, and that the volcano which buries a city preserves a thousand from destruction. But the evil is not for the time less fearful, because we have learned it to be necessary; and we easily understand the timidity or the tenderness of the spirit which would withdraw itself from the presence of destruction, and create in its imagination a world of which the peace should be unbroken, in which the sky should not darken nor the sea rage, in which the leaf should not change nor the blossom wither. That man is greater, however, who contemplates with an equal mind the alternations of terror and of beauty; who, not rejoicing less beneath the sunny sky, can bear also to watch the bars of twilight narrowing on the horizon; and, not less sensible to the blessing of the peace of nature, can rejoice in the magnificence of the ordinances by which that peace is protected and secured. But separated from both by an immeasurable distance would be the man who delighted in convul-

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sion and disease for their own sake; who found his daily food in the disorder of nature mingled with the suffering of humanity; and watched joyfully at the right hand of the Angel whose appointed work is to destroy as well as to accuse, while the corners of the house of feasting were struck by the wind from the wilderness.''

I will now cite a passage from Burke, which will seem tame after the pictorial animation of the passages from Macaulay and Ruskin; but which, because it is simply an exposition of opinions addressed to the understanding, will excellently illustrate the principle I am enforcing. He is treating of the dethronement of kings. ''As it was not made for common abuses, so it is not to be agitated by common minds. The speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance must begin, is faint, obscure, and not easily definable. It is not a single act, or a single event, which determines it. Governments must be abused and deranged indeed, before it can be thought of; and the prospect of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those whom nature has qualified to administer in extremities this critical, ambiguous, bitter potion to a distempered state. Times, and occasions, and provocations, will teach their own lessons. The wise will de-

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termine from the gravity of the case; the irritable from sensibility to oppression; the high-minded from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands; the brave and bold from the love of honorable danger in a generous cause: but, with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resource of the thinking and the good.''

As a final example I will cite a passage from M. Taine:—''De lá encore cette insolence contre les inférieurs, et ce mépris versé d'étage en étage depuis le premier jusqu'au dernier. Lorsque dans une société a loi consacre les conditions inégales, personne n'est exempt d'insulte; le grand seigneur, outragé par le roi, outrage le noble qui outrage le peuple; la nature humaine est humilié à tous les étages, et la société n'est plus qu'un commerce d'affronts.'' Translated the foregoing reads, ''Yet again that insolence towards inferiors and that contempt showered step by step from the first to the last. While in one society the law consecrates unequal conditions, no one is exempt from insult; the great lord abused by the king, abuses the nobleman who abuses the people: human nature is humiliated at every step, and society is not more than a business of affront.''

The law of Sequence by no means prescribes that we should invariably state the proposition before its qualifications—the thought before its illustrations; it merely prescribes that we should arrange our phrases

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in the order of logical dependence and rhythmical cadence, the order best suited for clearness and for harmony. The nature of the thought will determine the one, our sense of euphony the other.

4. *The Law of Climax.*—We need not pause long over this; it is generally understood. The condition of our sensibilities is such that to produce their effect stimulants must be progressive in intensity and varied in kind. On this condition rest the laws of Climax and Variety. The phrase or image which in one position will have a mild power of occupying the thoughts, or stimulating the emotions, loses this power if made to succeed one of like kind but more agitating influence, and will gain an accession of power if it be artfully placed on the wave of a climax. We laugh at

"Then came Dalhousie, that great God of War,
Lieutenant-Colonel to the Earl of Mar,"

because of the relaxation which follows the sudden tension of the mind; but if we remove the idea of the colonelcy from this position of anti-climax, the same couplet becomes energetic rather than ludicrous:—

"Lieutenant-Colonel to the Earl of Mar,
Then came Dalhousie, that great God of War."

I have selected this strongly marked case, instead of several feeble passages which might be chosen from the first book at hand, where-

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in carelessness allows the sentence to close with the least important phrases, and the style droops under frequent anti-climax. Let me now cite a passage from Macaulay which vividly illustrates the effect of Climax:—

"Never, perhaps, was the change which the progress of civilization has produced in the art of war more strikingly illustrated than on that day. Ajax beating down the Trojan leader with a rock which two ordinary men could scarcely lift, Horatius defending the bridge against an army, Richard, the Lion-hearted, spurring along the whole Saracen line without finding an enemy to withstand his assault, Robert Bruce crushing with one blow the helmet and head of Sir Henry Bohun in sight of the whole array of England and Scotland, such are the heroes of a dark age. (Here is an example of suspended meaning, where the suspense intensifies the effect, because each particular is vividly apprehended in itself, and all culminate in the conclusion; they do not complicate the thought, or puzzle us, they only heighten expectation.) In such an age bodily vigor is the most indispensable qualification of a warrior. At Landen two poor sickly beings, who, in a rude state of society, would have been regarded as too puny to bear any part in combats, were the souls of two great armies. In some heathen countries they would have been exposed while infants. In Christendom they would, six hundred years earlier, have been sent to some

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quiet cloister. But their lot had fallen on a time when men had discovered that the strength of the muscles is far inferior in value to the strength of the mind. It is probable that, among the hundred and twenty thousand soldiers who were marshaled round Neerwinden under all the standards of Western Europe, the two feeblest in body were the hunch-backed dwarf, who urged forward the fiery onset of France, and the asthmatic skeleton who covered the slow retreat of England.''

The effect of Climax is very marked in the drama. Every speech, every scene, every act, should have its progressive sequence. Nothing can be more injudicious than a trivial phrase, following an energetic phrase, a feeble thought succeeding a burst of passion, or even a passionate thought succeeding one more passionate. Yet this error is frequently committed.

In the drama all laws of Style are more imperious than in fiction or prose of any kind, because the art is more intense. But Climax is demanded in every species of composition, for its springs from a psychological necessity. It is pressed upon, however, by the law of Variety in a way to make it far from safe to be too rigidly followed. It easily degenerates into monotony.

5. *The Law of Variety*.—Some one, after detailing an elaborate recipe for a salad, wound up the numeration of ingredients and

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quantities with the advice to "open the window and throw it all away." This advice might be applied to the foregoing enumeration of the laws of Style, unless these were supplemented by the important law of Variety. A style which rigidly interpreted the precepts of economy, simplicity, sequence, and climax, which rejected all superfluous words and redundant ornaments, adopted the easiest and most logical arrangement, and closed every sentence and every paragraph with a climax, might be a very perfect bit of mosaic, but would want the glow and movement of a living mind. Monotony would settle on it like a paralyzing frost. A series of sentences in which every phrase was a distinct thought, would no more serve as pabulum for the mind, than portable soup freed from all the fibrous tissues of meat and vegetable would serve as food for the body. Animals perish from hunger in the presence of pure albumen; and minds would lapse into idiocy in the presence of unadulterated thought. But without invoking extreme cases, let us simply remember the psychological fact that it is as easy for sentences to be too compact as for food to be too concentrated; and that many a happy negligence, which to microscopic criticism may appear defective, will be the means of giving clearness and grace to a style. Of course the indolent indulgence in this laxity robs style of all grace and power. But monotony in the structure

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of sentences, monotony of cadence, monotony of climax, monotony anywhere, necessarily defeats the very aim and end of style; it calls attention to the manner; it blunts the sensibilities; it renders excellencies odious.

"Beauty deprived of its proper foils and adjuncts ceases to be enjoyed as beauty, just as light deprived of all shadow ceases to be enjoyed as light. A white canvas can not produce an effect of sunshine; the painter must darken it in some places before he can make it look luminous in others; nor can an uninterrupted succession of beauty produce the true effect of beauty; it must be foiled by inferiority before its own power can be developed. Nature has for the most part mingled her inferior and noble elements as she mingles sunshine with shade, giving due use and influence to both, and the painter who chooses to remove the shadow, perishes in the burning desert he has created. The truly high and beautiful art of Angelico is continually refreshed and strengthened by his frank portraiture of the most ordinary features of his brother monks and of the recorded peculiarities of ungainly sanctity; but the modern German and Raphaelesque schools lose all honor and nobleness in barberlike admiration of handsome faces, and have, in fact, no real faith except in straight noses, and curled hair. Paul Veronese opposes the dwarf to the soldier, and the negress to the queen; Shakespeare places Caliban beside Miranda.

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and Autolycus beside Perdita; but the vulgar idealist withdraws his beauty to the safety of the saloon, and his innocence to the seclusion of the cloister; he pretends that he does this in delicacy of choice and purity of sentiment, while in truth he has neither courage to front the monster, nor wit enough to furnish the knave.''

And how is Variety to be secured? The plan is simple, but, like many other simple plans, is not without difficulty. It is for the writer to obey the great cardinal principle of Sincerity, and be brave enough to express himself in his own way, following the moods of his own mind, rather than endeavoring to catch the accents of another, or to adapt himself to some standard of taste. No man really thinks and feels monotonously. If he is monotonous in his manner of setting forth his thoughts and feelings, that is either because he has not learned the art of writing, or because he is more or less consciously imitating the manner of others. The subtle play of thought will give movement and life to his style if he does not clog it with critical superstitions. I do not say that it will give him grace and power; I do not say that relying on perfect sincerity will make him a fine writer, because sincerity will not give talent; but I say that sincerity will give him all the power that is possible to him, and will secure him the inestimable excellence of Variety.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF STYLE

BY HERBERT SPENCER

I.—CAUSES OF FORCE IN LANGUAGE WHICH DEPEND UPON ECONOMY OF THE MENTAL ENERGIES

1. *The Principle of Economy Applied to Words.*—

COMMENTING on the seeming incongruity between his father's argumentative powers and his ignorance of formal logic, Tristram Shandy says: "It was a matter of just wonder with my worthy tutor, and two or three fellows of that learned society, that a man who knew not so much as the names of his tools, should be able to work after that fashion with them." Sterne's intended implication that a knowledge of the principles of reasoning neither makes, nor is essential to, a good reasoner, is doubtless true. Thus, too, is it with grammar. As Dr. Latham, condemning the usual school-drill in Lindley Murray, rightly remarks:—"Gross vulgarity is a fault to be prevented; but the proper prevention is to be got from habit—not rules." Similarly, there can be little question that good composition is far less dependent upon acquaintance with its laws, than upon practise and natural apti-

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tude. A clear head, a quick imagination, and a sensitive ear, will go far towards making all rhetorical precepts needless. He who daily hears and reads well-framed sentences, will naturally more or less tend to use similar ones. And where there exists any mental idiosyncrasy—where there is a deficient verbal memory, or an inadequate sense of logical dependence, or but little preception of order, or a lack of constructive ingenuity; no amount of instruction will remedy the defect. Nevertheless, *some* practical result may be expected from a familiarity with the principles of style. The endeavor to conform to laws may tell, tho slowly. And if in no other way, yet, as facilitating revision, a knowledge of the thing to be achieved—a clear idea of what constitutes a beauty, and what a blemish—can not fail to be of service.

No general theory of expression seems yet to have been enunciated. The maxims contained in works on composition and rhetoric, are presented in an unorganized form. Standing as isolated dogmas—as empirical generalizations, they are neither so clearly apprehended, nor so much respected, as they would be were they deduced from some simple first principle. We are told that "brevity is the soul of wit." We hear styles condemned as verbose or involved. Blair says that every needless part of a sentence "interrupts the description and clogs the image"; and again, that "long sentences fatigue the reader's at-

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tention.'' It is remarked by Lord Kames, that ''to give the utmost force to a period, it ought, if possible, to be closed with the word that makes the greatest figure.'' That parentheses should be avoided and that Saxon words should be used in preference to those of Latin origin, are established precepts. But, however influential the truths thus dogmatically embodied, they would be much more influential if reduced to something like scientific ordination. In this, as in other cases, conviction will be greatly strengthened when we understand the *why*. And we may be sure that a comprehension of the general principle from which the rules of composition result, will not only bring them home to us with greater force, but will discover to us other rules of like origin.

On seeking for some clue to the law underlying these current maxims, we may see shadowed forth in many of them, the importance of economizing the reader's or hearer's attention. To so present ideas that they may be apprehended with the least possible mental effort, is the desideratum towards which most of the rules above quoted point. When we condemn writing that is wordy, or confused, or intricate—when we praise this style as easy, and blame that as fatiguing, we consciously or unconsciously assume this desideratum as our standard of judgment. Regarding language as an apparatus of symbols for the conveyance of thought, we may

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say that, as in a mechanical apparatus, the more simple and the better arranged its parts, the greater will be the effect produced. In either case, whatever force is absorbed by the machine is deducted from the result. A reader or listener has at each moment but a limited amount of mental power available. To recognize and interpret the symbols presented to him, requires part of this power; to arrange and combine the images suggested requires a further part; and only that part which remains can be used for realizing the thought conveyed. Hence, the more time and attention it takes to receive and understand each sentence, the less time and attention can be given to the contained idea; and the less vividly will that idea be conceived.

How truly language must be regarded as a hindrance to thought, tho the necessary instrument of it, we shall clearly perceive on remembering the comparative force with which simple ideas are communicated by signs. To say, "Leave the room," is less expressive than to point to the door. Placing a finger on the lips is more forcible than whispering, "Do not speak." A beck of the hand is better than, "Come here." No phrase can convey the idea of surprize so vividly as opening the eyes and raising the eyebrows. A shrug of the shoulders would lose much by translation into words. Again, it may be remarked that when oral language is employed, the strongest effects are produced by interjec-

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tions, which condense entire sentences into syllables. And in other cases, where custom allows us to express thoughts by single words as in *Beware! Heigho! Fudge!* much force would be lost by expanding them into specific propositions. Hence, carrying out the metaphor that language is the vehicle of thought, there seems reason to think that in all cases the friction and inertia of the vehicle deduct from its efficiency; and that in composition, the chief, if not the sole thing to be done, is, to reduce this friction and inertia to the smallest possible amount. Let us then inquire whether economy of the recipient's attention is not the secret of effect, alike in the right choice and collocation of words, in the best arrangement of clauses in a sentence, in the proper order of its principal and subordinate propositions, in the judicious use of simile, metaphor, and other figures of speech, and even in the rhythmical sequence of syllables.

The greater forcibleness of Saxon English, or rather non-Latin English, first claims our attention. The several special reasons assignable for this may all be reduced to the general reason—economy. The most important of them is early association. A child's vocabulary is almost wholly Saxon. He says, *I have*, not *I possess*—*I wish* not *I desire;* he does not *reflect*, he *thinks;* he does not beg for *amusment*, but for *play;* he calls things *nice* or *nasty*, not *pleasant* or *disagreeable.*

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The synonyms which he learns in after years, never become so closely, so organically connected with the ideas signified, as to these original words used in childhood; and hence the association remains less strong. But in what does a strong association between a word and an idea differ from a weak one? Simply in the greater ease and rapidity of the suggestive action. It can be in nothing else. Both of two words, if they be strictly synonymous, eventually call up the same image. The expression—It is *acid,* must in the end give rise to the same thought as—It is *sour;* but because the term *acid* was learnt later in life, and has not been so often followed by the thought symbolized, it does not so readily arouse that thought as the term *sour*. If we remember how slowly and with what labor the appropriate ideas follow unfamiliar words in another language, and how increasing familiarity with such words brings greater rapidity and ease of comprehension; and if we consider that the same process must have gone on with the words of our mother tongue from childhood upwards, we shall clearly see that the earliest learnt and oftenest used words, will, other things equal, call up images with less loss of time and energy than their later learnt synonyms.

The further superiority possessed by Saxon English in its comparative brevity, obviously comes under the same generalization. If it be an advantage to express an idea in the

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smallest number of words, then will it be an advantage to express it in the smallest number of syllables. If circuitous phrases and needless expletives distract the attention and diminish the strength of the impression produced, then do surplus articulations do so. A certain effort, tho commonly an inappreciable one, must be required to recognize every vowel and consonant. If, as all know, it is tiresome to listen to an indistinct speaker, or read a badly-written manuscript; and if, as we can not doubt, the fatigue is a cumulative result of the attention needed to catch successive syllables; it follows that attention is in such cases absorbed by each syllable. And if this be true when the syllables are difficult of recognition, it will also be true, tho in a less degree, when the recognition of them is easy. Hence, the shortness of Saxon words becomes a reason for their greater force. One qualification, however, must not be overlooked. A word which in itself embodies the most important part of the idea to be conveyed, especially when that idea is an emotional one, may often with advantage be a polysyllabic word. Thus it seems more forcible to say, "It is *magnificent,*" than "It is *grand.*" The word *vast* is not so powerful a one as *stupendous.* Calling a thing *nasty* is not so effective as calling it *disgusting.*

There seem to be several causes for this exceptional superiority of certain long words.

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We may ascribe it partly to the fact that a voluminous, mouth-filling epithet is, by its very size, suggestive of largeness or strength; witness the immense pomposity of sesquipedalian verbiage: and when great power of intensity has to be suggested, this association of ideas aids the effect. A further cause may be that a word of several syllables admits of more emphatic articulation; and as emphatic articulation is a sign of emotion, the unusual impressiveness of the thing named is implied by it. Yet another cause is that a long word (of which the latter syllables are generally inferred as soon as the first are spoken) allows the hearer's consciousness a longer time to dwell upon the quality predicated; and where, as in the above cases, it is to this predicated quality that the entire attention is called, and an advantage results from keeping it before the mind for an appreciable time. The reasons which we have given for preferring short words evidently do not hold here. So that to make our generalization quite correct we must say, that while in certain sentences expressing strong feeling, the word which more specially implies that feeling may often with advantage be a many-syllabled or Latin one; in the immense majority of cases, each word serving but as a step to the idea embodied by the whole sentence, should, if possible, be a one-syllabled or Saxon one.

Once more, that frequent cause of strength

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in Saxon and other primitive words—their imitative character, may be similarly resolved into the more general cause. Both those directly imitative, as *splash, bang, whiz, roar,* etc., and those analogically imitative, as *rough, smooth, keen, blunt, thin, hard crag,* etc., have a greater or less likeness to the things symbolized; and by making on the senses impressions allied to the ideas to be called up, they save part of the effort needed to call up such ideas, and leave more attention for the ideas themselves.

The economy of the recipient's mental energy, into which are thus resolvable the several causes of the strength of Saxon English, may equally be traced in the superiority of specific over generic words. That concrete terms produce more vivid impressions than abstract ones, and should, when possible, be used instead, is a current maxim of composition. As Dr. Campbell says, "The more general the terms are, the picture is the fainter; the more special they are, the brighter." We should avoid such a sentence as:

> In proportion as the manners, customs, and amusements of a nation are cruel and barbarous, the regulations of their penal code will be severe.

And in place of it we should write:

> In proportion as men delight in battles, bull-fights, and combats of gladiators, will they punish by hanging, burning, and the rack.

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This superiority of specific expression is clearly due to a saving of the effort required to translate words into thoughts. As we do not think in generals but in particulars—as, whenever any class of things is referred to, we represent it to ourselves by calling to mind individual members of it; it follows that when an abstract word is used, the hearer or reader has to choose from his stock of images, one or more, by which he may figure to himself the genus mentioned. In doing this, some delay must arise—some force be expanded; and if, by employing a specific term, an appropriate image can be at once suggested, an economy is achieved, and a more vivid impression produced.

Turning now from the choice of words to their sequence, we shall find the same general principle hold good. We have *à priori* reasons for believing that in every sentence there is some one order of words more effective than any other; and that this order is the one which presents the elements of the proposition in the succession in which they may be most readily put together. As in the narrative, the events should be stated in such sequence that the mind may not have to go backwards and forwards in order to rightly connect them; as in a group of sentences, the arrangement should be such, that each of them may be understood as it comes, without waiting for subsequent ones; so in every sentence, the sequence of words should be

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that which suggests the constituents of the thought in the order most convenient for the building up that thought. Duly to enforce this truth, and to prepare the way for applications of it, we must briefly inquire into the mental act by which the meaning of a series of words is apprehended.

We can not more simply do this than by considering the proper collocation of the substantive and adjective. Is it better to place the adjective before the substantive, or the substantive before the adjective? Ought we to say with the French—*un cheval noir;* or to say as we do a black horse? Probably, most persons of culture would decide that one order is as good as the other. Alive to the bias produced by habit, they would ascribe to that the preference they feel for our own form of expression. They would expect those educated in the use of the opposite form to have an equal preference for that. And thus they would conclude that neither of these instinctive judgments is of any worth. There is, however, a philosophical ground for deciding in favor of the English custom. If "a horse black" be the arrangement, immediately on the utterance of the word "horse," there arises, or tends to arise, in the mind, a picture answering to that word; and as there has been nothing to indicate what *kind* of horse, any image of a horse suggests itself. Very likely, however, the image will be that of a brown horse: brown horses being the

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most familiar. The result is that when the word "black" is added, a check is given to the process of thought. Either the picture of a brown horse already present to the imagination has to be suppressed, and the picture of a black one summoned in its place; or else, if the picture of a brown horse be yet unformed, the tendency to form it has to be stopped. Whichever is the case, a certain amount of hindrance results. But if, on the other hand, "a black horse" be the expression used, no such mistake can be made. The word "black," indicating an abstract quality, arouses no definite idea. It simply prepares the mind for conceiving some object of that color; and the attention is kept suspended until that object is known. If, then, by the precedence of the adjective, the idea is conveyed without liability to error, whereas the precedence of the substantive is apt to produce a misconception; it follows that the one gives the mind less trouble than the other, and is therefore more forcible.

Possibly it will be objected that the adjective and substantive come so close together, that practically they may be considered as uttered at the same moment; and that on hearing the phrase, "a horse black," there is not time to imagine a wrongly-colored horse before the word "black" follows to prevent it. It must be owned that it is not easy to decide by introspection whether this is so or not. But there are facts collaterally imply-

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ing that it is not. Our ability to anticipate the words yet unspoken is one of them. If the ideas of the hearer kept considerably behind the expressions of the speaker, as the objection assumes, he could hardly foresee the end of a sentence by the time it was half delivered: yet this constantly happens. Were the supposition true, the mind, instead of anticipating, would be continually falling more and more in arrear. If the meanings of words are not realized as fast as the words are uttered, then the loss of time over each word must entail such an accumulation of delays as to leave a hearer entirely behind. But whether the force of these replies be or be not admitted, it will scarcely be denied that the right formation of a picture will be facilitated by presenting its elements in the order in which they are wanted; even tho the mind should do nothing until it has received them all.

What is here said respecting the succession of the adjective and substantive is obviously applicable, by change of terms, to the adverb and verb. And without further explanation, it will be manifest, that in the use of prepositions and other particles, most languages spontaneously conform with more or less completeness to this law.

On applying a like analysis to the larger divisions of a sentence, we find not only that the same principle holds good, but that the

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advantage of respecting it becomes marked. In the arrangement of predicate and subject, for example, we are at once shown that as the predicate determines the aspect under which the subject is to be conceived, it should be placed first; and the striking effect produced by so placing it becomes comprehensible. Take the often-quoted contrast between—"Great is Diana of the Ephesians," and—"Diana of the Ephesians is great." When the first arrangement is used, the utterance of the word "great" arouses those vague associations of an impressive nature with which it has been habitually connected; the imagination is prepared to clothe with high attributes whatever follows; and when the words, "Diana of the Ephesians," are heard, all the appropriate imagery which can, on the instant, be summoned, is used in the formation of the picture: the mind being thus led directly, and without error, to the intended impression. When, on the contrary, the reverse order is followed, the idea, "Diana of the Ephesians," is conceived with no special reference to greatness; and when the words, "is great," are added, the conception has to be remodeled: whence arises a loss of mental energy, and a corresponding diminution of effect. The following verse from Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," tho somewhat irregular in structure, well illustrates the same truth:

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"*Alone, alone, all, all alone,*
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony."

Of course the principle equally applies when the predicate is a verb or a participle. And as effect is gained by placing first all words indicating the quality, conduct, or condition of the subject, it follows that the copula also should have precedence. It is true, that the general habit of our language resists this arrangement of predicate, copula, and subject; but we may readily find instances of the additional force gained by conforming to it. Thus in the line from Julius Cæsar"—

"Then *burst* this mighty heart,"

priority is given to a word embodying both predicate and copula. In a passage contained in "The Battle of Flodden Field," the like order is systematically employed with great effect:

"The Border slogan rent the sky!
A Home! a Gordon! was the cry;
Loud were the clanging blows:
Advanced,—forced back,—now low, now high,
The pennon sunk and rose;
As *bends* the bark's mast in the gale
When *rent are* rigging, shrouds, and sail,
It wavered 'mid the foes."

Pursuing the principle yet further, it is obvious that for producing the greatest ef-

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fect, not only should the main divisions of a sentence observe this sequence, but the subdivisions of these should be similarly arranged. In nearly all cases, the predicate is accompanied by some limit or qualification called its complement. Commonly, also, the circumstances of the subject, which form its complement, have to be specified. And as these qualifications and circumstances must determine the mode in which the acts and things they belong to are conceived, precedence should to given to them. Lord Kames notices the fact that this order is preferable; tho without giving the reason. He says:—"When a circumstance is placed at the beginning of the period, or near the beginning, the transition from it to the principal subject is agreeable: is like ascending or going upward." A sentence arranged in illustration of this will be desirable. Here is one:

Whatever it may be in theory, it is clear that in practise the French idea of liberty is—the right of every man to be master of the rest.

In this case, were the first two clauses, up to the word "practise" inclusive, which qualify the subject, to be placed at the end instead of the beginning, much of the force would be lost; as thus:

The French idea of liberty is—the right of every man to be master of the rest; in practise at least, if not in theory.

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Similarly with respect to the conditions under which any fact is predicated. Observe in the following example the effect of putting them last:

How immense would be the stimulus to progress, were the honor now given to wealth and title given exclusively to high achievements and intrinsic worth!

And then observe the superior effect of putting them first:

Were the honor now given to wealth and title given exclusively to high achievements and intrinsic worth, how immense would be the stimulus to progress!

The effect of giving priority to the complement of the predicate, as well as the predicate itself, is finely displayed in the opening of "Hyperion":

"*Deep in the shady sadness of a vale*
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star
Sat gray-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone."

Here it will be observed, not only that the predicate "sat" precedes the subject "Saturn," and that the three lines in italics, constituting the complement of the predicate, come before it; but that in the structure of that complement also, the same order is followed: each line being so arranged that the qualifying words are placed before the words suggesting concrete images.

The right succession of the principal and

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subordinate propositions in a sentence manifestly depends on the same law. Regard for economy of the recipient's attention, which, as we find, determines the best order for the subject, copula, predicate, and their complements, dictates that the subordinate proposition shall precede the principal one, when the sentence includes two. Containing, as the subordinate proposition does, some qualifying or explanatory idea, its priority prevents misconception of the principal one; and therefore saves the mental effort needed to correct such misconception. This will be seen in the annexed example.

> The secrecy once maintained in respect to the parliamentary debates, is still thought needful in diplomacy; and in virtue of this secret diplomacy, England may any day be unawares betrayed by its ministers into a war costing a hundred thousand lives, and hundreds of millions of treasure: yet the English pique themselves on being a self-governed people.

The two subordinate propositions, ending with the semicolon and colon respectively, almost wholly determine the meaning of the principal proposition with which it concludes; and the effect would be lost were they placed last instead of first.

The general principle of right arrangement in sentences, which we have traced in its application to the leading divisions of them, equally determines the proper order of their

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minor divisions. In every sentence of any complexity the complement to the subject contains several clauses, and that to the predicate several others; and these may be arranged in greater or less conformity to the law of easy apprehension. Of course with these, as with the larger members, the succession should be from the less specific to the more specific—from the abstract to the concrete.

Now, however, we must notice a further condition to be fulfilled in the proper construction of a sentence; but still a condition dictated by the same general principle with the other: the condition, namely, that the words and expressions most nearly related in thought shall be brought the closest together. Evidently the single words, the minor clauses, and the leading divisions of every proposition, severally qualify each other. The longer the time that elapses between the mention of any qualifying member and the member qualified, the longer must the mind be exerted in carrying forward the qualifying member ready for use. And the more numerous the qualifications to be simultaneously remembered and rightly applied, the greater will be the mental power expended, and the smaller the effect produced. Hence, other things equal, force will be gained by so arranging the members of a sentence that these suspensions shall at any moment be the fewest in number; and shall also be of the short-

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est duration. The following is an instance of defective combination:

A modern newspaper-statement, tho probably true, would be laughed at, if quoted in a book as testimony; but the letter of a court gossip is thought good historical evidence, if written some centuries ago.

A rearrangement of this, in accordance with the principle indicated above, will be found to increase the effect. Thus:

Tho probably true, a modern newspaper-statement quoted in a book as testimony, would be laughed at; but the letter of a court gossip, if written some centuries ago, is thought good historical evidence.

By making this change, some of the suspensions are avoided and others shortened; while there is less liability to produce premature conceptions. The passage quoted below from "Paradise Lost" affords a fine instance of a sentence well arranged; alike in the priority of the subordinate members, in the avoidance of long and numerous suspensions, and in the correspondence between the order of the clauses and the sequence of the phenomena described, which, by the way, is a further prerequisite to easy comprehension, and therefore to effect.

"As when a prowling wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve
In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,

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Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold:
Or as a thief bent to unhoard the cash
Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
Cross-barr'd, and bolted fast, fear no assault,
In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles:
So clomb the first grand thief into God's fold;
So since into his church lewd hirelings climb."

The habitual use of sentences in which all or most of the descriptive and limiting elements precede those described and limited, gives rise to what is called the inverted style: a title which is, however, by no means confined to this structure, but is often used where the order of the words is simply unusual. A more appropriate title would be the *direct style*, as contrasted with the other, or *indirect style*: The peculiarity of the one being, that it conveys each thought into the mind step by step with little liability to error; and of the other, that it gets the right thought conceived by a series of approximations.

The superiority of the direct over the indirect form of sentence, implied by the several conclusions that have been drawn, must not, however, be affirmed without reservation. Tho, up to a certain point, it is well for the qualifying clauses of a period to precede those qualified; yet, as carrying forward each qualifying clause costs some mental effort, it follows that when the number of them and the time they are carried become great, we reach a limit beyond which more is lost than is gained. Other things equal, the arrange-

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ment should be such that no concrete image shall be suggested until the materials out of which it is to be made have been presented. And yet, as lately pointed out, other things equal, the fewer the materials to be held at once, and the shorter the distance they have to be borne, the better. Hence in some cases it becomes a question whether most mental effort will be entailed by the many and long suspensions, or by the correction of successive misconceptions.

This question may sometimes be decided by considering the capacity of the persons addressed. A greater grasp of mind is required for the ready comprehension of thoughts expressed in the direct manner, where the sentences are anywise intricate. To recollect a number of preliminaries stated in elucidation of a coming idea, and to apply them all to the formation of it when suggested, demands a good memory and considerable power of concentration. To one possessing these, the direct method will mostly seem the best; while to one deficient in them it will seem the worst. Just as it may cost a strong man less effort to carry a hundred-weight from place to place at once, than by a stone at a time; so, to an active mind it may be easier to bear along all the qualifications of an idea and at once rightly form it when named, than to first imperfectly conceive such idea, and then carry back to it, one by one, the details and limitations after-

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wards mentioned. While conversely, as for a boy the only possible mode of transferring a hundredweight, is that of taking it in portions; so, for a weak mind, the only possible mode of forming a compound conception may be that of building it up by carrying separately its several parts.

That the indirect method—the method of conveying the meaning by a series of approximations—is best fitted for the uncultivated, may indeed be inferred from their habitual use of it. The form of expression adopted by the savage, as in—"Water, give me," is the simplest type of the approximate arrangement. In pleonasms, which are comparatively prevalent among the uneducated, the same essential structure is seen; as, for instance, in—"The men, they were there." Again, the old possessive case—"The king, his crown," conforms to the like order of thought. Moreover, the fact that the indirect mode is called the natural one, implies that it is the one spontaneously employed by the common people: that is—the one easiest for undisciplined minds.

There are many cases, however, in which neither the direct nor the indirect structure is the best; but where an intermediate structure is preferable to both. When the number of circumstances and qualifications to be included in the sentence is great, the most judicious course is neither to enumerate them all before introducing the idea to which they

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belong, nor to put this idea first and let it be remodeled to agree with the particulars afterwards mentioned; but to do a little of each. Take a case. It is desirable to avoid so extremely indirect an arrangement as the following:

"We came to our journey's end, at last, with no small difficulty, after much fatigue, through deep roads, and bad weather."

Yet to transform this into an entirely indirect sentence would not produce a satisfactory effect; as witness:—

"At last, with no small difficulty, after much fatigue, through deep roads, and bad weather, we came to our journey's end."

Dr. Whately, from whom we quote the first of these two arrangements, proposes this construction:—

"At last, after much fatigue, through deep roads and bad weather, we came, with no small difficulty, to our journey's end."

Here it will be observed that by introducing the words "we came" a little earlier in the sentence, the labor of carrying forward so many particulars is diminished, and the subsequent qualification "with no small difficulty" entails an addition to the thought that is very easily made. But a further improvement may be produced by introducing the words "we came" still earlier; especially

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if at the same time the qualifications be rearranged in conformity with the principle already explained, that the more abstract elements of the thought should come before the more concrete. Observe the better effect obtained by making these two changes:

At last, with no small difficulty, and after much fatigue, we came, through deep roads and bad weather, to our journey's end.

This reads with comparative smoothness; that is—with less hindrance from suspensions and reconstructions of thought—with less mental effort.

Before dismissing this branch of our subject, it should be further remarked, that even when addressing the most vigorous intellects, the direct style is unfit for communicating ideas of a complex or abstract character. So long as the mind has not much to do, it may be well able to grasp all the preparatory clauses of a sentence, and to use them effectively; but if some subtlety in the argument absorb the attention—if every faculty be strained in endeavoring to catch the speaker's or writer's drift, it may happen that the mind, unable to carry on both processes at once, will break down, and allow the elements of the thought to lapse into confusion.

2. *The Effect of Figurative Language Explained.*—Turning now to consider figures of speech, we may equally discern the same general law of effect. Underlying all the rules

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given for the choice and right use of them, we shall find the same fundamental requirement—economy of attention. It is indeed chiefly because they so well subserve this requirement, that figures of speech are employed. To bring the mind more easily to the desired conception, is in many cases solely, and in all cases mainly, their object.

Let us begin with the figure called Synechdoche. The advantage sometimes gained by putting a part for the whole, is due to the more convenient, or more accurate, presentation of the idea. If, instead of saying "a fleet of ten ships," we say "a fleet of ten *sail*," the picture of a group of vessels at sea is more readily suggested; and is so because the sails constitute the most conspicuous parts of vessels so circumstanced: whereas the word *ships* would very likely remind us of vessels in dock. Again, to say, "All *hands* to the pumps," is better than to say, "All *men* to the pumps"; as it suggests the men in the special attitude intended, and so saves effort. Bringing "*gray hairs* with sorrow to the grave," is another expression, the effect of which has the same cause.

The occasional increase of force produced by Metonymy may be similarly accounted for. "The low morality of *the bar*," is a phrase both more brief and signficant than the literal one it stands for. A belief in the ultimate supremacy of intelligence over brute force, is conveyed in a more concrete, and there-

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fore more realizable form, if we substitute the *pen* and *the sword* for the two abstract terms. To say, "Beware of drinking!" is less effective than to say, "Beware of *the bottle*!" and is so clearly because it calls up a less specific image.

The Simile is in many cases used chiefly with a view to ornament; but whenever it increases the *force* of a passage, it does so by being an economy. Here is an instance: —The illusion that great men and great events came oftener in early times than now, is partly due to historical perspective. As in a range of equidistant columns, the furthest off look the closest; so, the conspicuous objects of the past seem more thickly clustered the more remote they are.

To construct by a process of literal explanation, the thought thus conveyed, would take many sentences; and the first elements of the picture would become faint while the imagination was busy in adding the others. But by the help of a comparison all effort is saved; the picture is instantly realized, and its full effect produced.

Of the position of the Simile, it needs only to remark, that what has been said respecting the order of the adjective and substantive, predicate and subject, principal and subordinate propositions, etc., is applicable here. As whatever qualifies should precede whatever is qualified, force will generally be gained by placing the simile before the object

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to which it is applied. That this arrangement is the best, may be seen in the following passage from the "Lady of the Lake":—

"As wreath of snow, on mountain breast,
Slides from the rock that gave it rest,
Poor Ellen glided from her stay,
And at the monarch's feet she lay."

Inverting these couplets will be found to diminish the effect considerably. There are cases, however, even where the simile is a simple one, in which it may with advantage be placed last; as in these lines from Alexander Smith's "Life Drama":—

"I see the future stretch
All dark and barren as a rainy sea."

The reason for this seems to be, that so abstract an idea as that attaching to the word "future," does not present itself to the mind in any definite form; and hence the subsequent arrival at the simile entails no reconstruction of the thought.

Such, however, are not the only cases in which this order is the most forcible. As the advantage of putting the simile before the object depends on its being carried forward in the mind to assist in forming an image of the object; it must happen that if, from length of complexity, it can not be so carried forward, the advantage is not gained. The annexed sonnet, by Coleridge, is defective from this cause:

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"As when a child, on some long winter's night,
Affrighted, clinging to its grandma's knees,
With eager won'ring and perturb'd delight
Listens strange tales of fearful dark decrees,
Mutter'd to wretch by necromantic spell;
Or of those hags who at the witching time
Of murky midnight, ride the air sublime,
And mingle foul embrace with fiends of hell;
Cold horror drinks its blood! Anon the tear
More gentle starts, to hear the beldame tell
Of pretty babes, that lov'd each other dear,
Murder'd by cruel uncle's mandate fell:
Ev'n such the shiv'ring joys thy tones impart,
Ev'n so, thou, Siddons, meltest my sad heart."

Here, from the lapse of time and accumulation of circumstances, the first part of the comparison is forgotten before its application is reached; and requires rereading. Had the main idea been first mentioned, less effort would have been required to retain it, and to modify the conception of it into harmony with the comparison, than to remember the comparison, and refer back to its successive features for help in forming the final image.

The superiority of the Metaphor to the Simile is ascribed by Dr. Whately to the fact that "all men are more gratified at catching the resemblance for themselves, than in having it pointed out to them." But after what has been said, the great economy it achieves will seem the more probable cause. Lear's exclamation—

"Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend,"

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would lose part of its effect where it changed into—

"Ingratitude! thou fiend with heart like marble;"

and the loss would result partly from the position of the simile and partly from the extra number of words required. When the comparison is an involved one, the greater force of the metaphor, consequent on its greater brevity, becomes much more conspicuous. If, drawing an analogy between mental and physical phenomena, we say,

—As, in passing through the crystal, beams of white light are decomposed into the colors of the rainbow; so, in traversing the soul of the poet, the colorless rays of truth are transformed into brightly-tinted poetry;—it is clear that in receiving the double set of words expressing the two halves of the comparison, and in carrying the one half to the other, considerable attention is absorbed. Most of this is saved, however, by putting the comparison in a metaphorical form, thus:

The white light of truth, in traversing the many-sided transparent soul of the poet, is refracted into iris-hued poetry.

How much is conveyed in a few words by the help of the Metaphor, and how vivid the effect consequently produced, may be abundantly exemplified. From "A Life Drama" may be quoted the phrase,

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"I spear'd him with a jest,"

as a fine instance among the many which that poem contains. A passage in the "Prometheus Unbound," of Shelley, displays the power of the metaphor to great advantage:

"Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young gray dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow unwilling wind."

This last expression is remarkable for the distinctness with which it realizes the features of the scene: bringing the mind, as it were, by a bound to the desired conception

But a limit is put to the advantageous use of the Metaphor, by the condition that it must be sufficiently simple to be understood from a hint. Evidently, if there be any obscurity in the meaning or application of it, no economy of attention will be gained; but rather the reverse. Hence, when the comparison is complex, it is usual to have recourse to the Simile. There is, however, a species of figure, sometimes classed under Allegory, but which might, perhaps, be better called Compound Metaphor, that enables us to retain the brevity of the metaphorical form even where the analogy is intricate. This is done by indicating the application of the figure at tne outset, and then leaving the mind to continue the parallel. Emerson

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has employed it with great effect in the first of his "Lectures on the Times":

"The main interest which any aspects of the Times can have for us, is the great spirit which gazes through them, the light which they can shed on the wonderful questions, What are we, and Whither do we tend? We do not wish to be deceived. Here we drift, like white sail across the wild ocean, now bright on the wave, now darkling in the trough of the sea; but from what port did we sail? Who knows? There is no one to tell us but such poor weather-tossed mariners as ourselves, whom we speak as we pass, or who have hoisted some signal, or floated to us some letter in a bottle from afar. But what know they more than we? They also found themselves on this wondrous sea. No; from the older sailors nothing. Over all their speaking-trumpets the gray sea and the loud winds answer—Not in us; not in Time."

The division of the Simile from the Metaphor is by no means a definite one. Between the one extreme in which the two elements of the comparison are detailed at full length and the analogy pointed out, and the other extreme in which the comparison is implied instead of stated, come intermediate forms, in which the comparison is partly stated and partly implied. For instance:

Astonished at the performances of the English plow, the Hindoos paint it, set it up, and worship

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it; thus turning a tool into an idol: linguists do the same with language.

There is an evident advantage in leaving the reader or hearer to complete the figure. And generally these intermediate forms are good in proportion as they do this; provided the mode of completing it be obvious.

Passing over much that may be said of like purport upon Hyperbole, Personification, Apostrophe, etc., let us close our remarks upon construction by a typical example. The general principle which has been enunciated is, that other things equal, the force of all verbal forms and arrangements is great, in proportion as the time and mental effort they demand from the recipient is small. The corollaries from this general principle have been severally illustrated; and it has been shown that the relative goodness of any two modes of expressing an idea, may be determined by observing which requires the shortest process of thought for its comprehension. But tho conformity in particular points has been exemplified, no cases of complete conformity have yet been quoted. It is indeed difficult to find them; for the English idiom does not commonly permit the order which theory dictates. A few, however, occur in Ossian. Here is one:

"As autumn's dark storms pour from two echoing hills, so towards each other approached the heroes. As two dark streams from high rocks meet and mix,

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and roar on the plain: loud, rough, and dark in battle meet Lochlin and Inisfail. . . . As the troubled noise of the ocean when roll the waves on high; as the last peal of the thunder of heaven; such is noise of the battle.''

Except in the position of the verb in the first two similes, the theoretically best arrangement is fully carried out in each of these sentences. The simile comes before the qualified image, the adjectives before the substantives, the predicate and copula before the subject, and their respective complements before them. That the passage is open to the charge of being bombastic proves nothing; or rather, proves our case. For what is bombast but a force of expression too great for the magnitude of the ideas embodied? All that may rightly be inferred is, that only in very rare cases, and then only to produce a climax, should *all* the conditions of effective expression be fulfilled.

3. *Arrangement of Minor Images in Building up a Thought.*—Passing on to a more complex application of the doctrine with which we set out, it must now be remarked, that not only in the structure of sentences, and the use of figures of speech, may economy of the recipient's mental energy be assigned as the cause of force; but that in the choice and arrangement of the minor images, out of which some large thought is to be built up, we may trace the same condition to effect. To select from the sentiment, scene, or

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event described, those typical elements which carry many others along with them; and so, by saying a few things but suggesting many, to abridge the description; is the secret of producing a vivid impression. An extract from Tennyson's "Mariana" will well illustrate this:

> "All day within the dreamy house,
> The door upon the hinges creaked,
> The blue fly sung i' the pane; the mouse
> Behind the moldering wainscot shrieked,
> Or from the crevice peered about."

The several circumstances here specified bring with them many appropriate associations. Our attention is rarely drawn by the buzzing of a fly in the window, save when everything is still. While the inmates are moving about the house, mice usually keep silence; and it is only when extreme quietness reigns that they peep from their retreats. Hence each of the facts mentioned, presupposing numerous others, calls up these with more or less distinctness; and revives the feeling of dull solitude with which they are connected in our experience. Were all these facts detailed instead of suggested, the attention would be so frittered away that little impression of dreariness would be produced. Similarily in other cases. Whatever the nature of the thought to be conveyed, this skilful selection of a few particulars which imply the rest, is the key to success. In

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the choice of competent ideas, as in the choice of expressions, the aim must be to convey the greatest quantity of thoughts with the smallest quantity of words.

The same principle may in some cases be advantageously carried yet further, by indirectly suggesting some entirely distinct thought in addition to the one expressed. Thus if we say,

The head of a good classic is as full of ancient myths, as that of a servant-girl of ghost-stories; it is manifest that besides the fact asserted, there is an implied opinion respecting the small value of classical knowledge: and as this implied opinion is recognized much sooner than it can be put into words, there is gain in omitting it. In other cases, again, great effect is produced by an overt omission; provided the nature of the idea left out is obvious. A good instance of this occurs in "Heroes and Hero-worship." After describing the way in which Burns was sacrificed to the idle curiosity of Lion-hunters—people who came not out of smypathy but merely to *see* him—people who sought a little amusement, and who got their amusement while "the Hero's life went for it!" Carlyle suggests a parallel thus:

"Richter says, in the Island of Sumatra there is a kind of 'Light-chafers,' large Fireflies, which people stick upon spits, and illuminate the ways with at night. Persons of conditions can thus travel with a pleasant

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radiance, which they much admire. Great honor to the Fire-flies! But——!—"

4. *The Superiority of Poetry to Prose Explained.*—Before inquiring whether the law of effect, thus far traced, explains the superiority of poetry to prose, it will be needful to notice some supplementary causes of force in expression, that have not yet been mentioned. These are not, properly speaking, additional causes; but rather secondary ones, originating from those already specified—reflex results of them. In the first place, then, we may remark that mental excitement spontaneously prompts the use of those forms of speech which have been pointed out as the most effective. "Out with him!" "Away with him!" are the natural utterances of a disturbed meeting. A voyager, describing a terrible storm he had witnessed, would rise to some such climax as—"Crack went the ropes and down came the mast." Astonishment may be heard expressed in the phrase —"Never was there such a sight!" All of which sentences are, it will be observed, constructed after the direct type. Again, every one knows that excited persons are given to figures of speech. The vituperation of the vulgar abounds with them: often, indeed, consists of little else. "Beast," "brute," "gallows rogue," "cutthroat villain," these, and other like metaphors and metaphorical epithets, at once call to mind a street quarrel. Further, it may be noticed that extreme

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brevity is another characteristic of passionate language. The sentences are generally incomplete; the particles are omitted; and frequently important words are left to be gathered from the context. Great admiration does not vent itself in a precise proposition, as "It is beautiful"; but in the simple exclamation,—"Beautiful!" He who, when reading a lawyer's letter, should say, "Vile rascal!" would be thought angry; while, "He is a vile rascal," would imply comparative coolness. Thus we see that alike in the order of the words, in the frequent use of figures, and in extreme conciseness, the natural utterances of excitement conform to the theoretical conditions of forcible expression.

Hence, then, the higher forms of speech acquire a secondary strength from association. Having, in actual life, habitually heard them in connection with vivid mental impressions, and having been accustomed to meet with them in the most powerful writing, they come to have in themselves a species of force. The emotions that have from time to time been produced by the strong thoughts wrapped up in these forms, are partially aroused by the forms themselves. They create a certain degree of animation; they induce a preparatory sympathy; and when the striking ideas looked for are reached, they are the more vividly realized.

The continuous use of these modes of expression that are alike forcible in themselves

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and forcible from their associations, produces the peculiarly impressive species of composition which we call poetry. Poetry, we shall find, habitually adopts those symbols of thought, and those methods of using them, which instinct and analysis agree in choosing as most effective; and becomes poetry by virtue of doing this. On turning back to the various specimens that have been quoted, it will be seen that the direct or inverted form of sentence predominates in them; and that to a degree quite inadmissible in prose. And not only in the frequency, but in what is termed the violence of the inversions, will this distinction be remarked. In the abundant use of figures, again, we may recognize the same truth. Metaphors, similes, hyperboles, and personifications, are the poet's colors, which he has liberty to employ almost without limit. We characterize as "poetical" the prose which uses these appliances of language with any frequency; and condemn it as "overflorid" or "affected" long before they occur with the profusion allowed in verse. Further, let it be remarked that in brevity—the other requisite of forcible expression which theory points out, and emotion spontaneously fulfils—poetical phraseology similarly differs from ordinary phraseology. Imperfect periods are frequent; elisions are perpetual; and many of the minor words, which would be deemed essential in prose, are dispensed with.

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Thus poetry, regarded as a vehicle of thought, is especially impressive partly because it obeys all the laws of effective speech, and partly because in so doing it imitates the natural utterances of excitement. While the matter embodied is idealized emotion, the vehicle is the idealized language of emotion. As the musical composer catches the cadences in which our feelings of joy and sympathy, grief and despair, vent themselves, and out of these germs evolves melodies suggesting higher phases of these feelings; so, the poet develops from the typical expressions in which men utter passion and sentiment, those choice forms of verbal combination in which concentrated passion and sentiment may be fitly presented.

There is one peculiarity of poetry conducing much to its effect—the peculiarity which is indeed usually thought its characteristic one—still remaining to be considered: we mean its rhythmical structure. This, improbable tho it seems, will be found to come under the same generalization with the others. Like each of them, it is an idealization of the natural language of strong emotion, which is known to be more or less metrical if the emotion be not too violent; and like each of them it is an economy of the reader's or hearer's attention. In the peculiar tone and manner we adopt in uttering versified language, may be discerned its relationship to the feelings; and the pleasure which

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its measured movements gives us, is ascribable to the comparative ease with which words metrically arranged can be recognized.

This last position will scarcely be at once admitted; but a little explanation will show its reasonableness. For if, as we have seen, there is an expenditure of mental energy in the mere act of listening to verbal articulations, or in that silent repetition of them which goes on in reading—if the perceptive faculties must be in active exercise to identify every syllable—then, any mode of so combining words as to present a regular recurrence of certain traits which the mind can anticipate, will diminish that strain upon the attention required by the total irregularity of prose. Just as the body, in receiving a series of varying concussions, must keep the muscles ready to meet the most violent of them, as not knowing when such may come; so, the mind in receiving unarranged articulations, must keep its perceptives active enough to recognize the least easily caught sounds. And as, if the concussions recur in a definite order, the body may husband its forces by adjusting the resistance needful for each concussion; so, if the syllables be rhythmically arranged, the mind may economize its energies by anticipating the attention required for each syllable.

Far-fetched tho this idea will perhaps be thought, a little introspection will countenance it. That we *do* take advantage of

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metrical language to adjust our perceptive faculties to the force of the expected articulations, is clear from the fact that we are balked by halting versification. Much as at the bottom of a flight of stairs, a step more or less than we counted upon gives us a shock; so, too, does a misplaced accent or a supernumerary syllable. In the one case, we *know* that there is an erroneous preadjustment; and we can scarcely doubt that there is one in the other. But if we habitually preadjust our perceptions to the measured movement of verse, the physical analogy above given renders it probable that by so doing we economize attention; and hence that metrical language is more effective than prose, because it enables us to do this.

Were there space, it might be worth while to inquire whether the pleasure we take in rime, and also that which we take in euphony, are not partly ascribable to the same general cause.

II.—CAUSES OF FORCE IN LANGUAGE WHICH DEPEND UPON ECONOMY OF THE MENTAL SENSIBILITIES

A few paragraphs only, can be devoted to a second division of our subject that here presents itself. To pursue in detail the laws of effect, as applying to the larger features of composition, would carry us beyond our

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limits. But we may briefly indicate a further aspect of the general principle hitherto traced out, and hint a few of its wider applications.

Thus far, then, we have considered only those causes of force in language which depend upon economy of the mental *energies*: we have now to glance at those which depend upon economy of the mental *sensibilities*. Questionable tho the devision may be as a psychological one, it will yet serve roughly to indicate the remaining field of investigation. It will suggest that besides considering the extent to which any faculty or group of faculties is tasked in receiving a form of words and realizing its contained idea, we have to consider the state in which this faculty or group of faculties is left; and how the reception of subsequent sentences and images will be influenced by that state. Without going at length into so wide a topic as the exercise of faculties and its reactive effects, it will be sufficient here to call to mind that every faculty (when in a state of normal activity) is most capable at the outset; and that the change in its condition, which ends in what we term exhaustion, begins simultaneously with its exercise. This generalization, with which we are all familiar in our bodily experiences, and which our daily language recognizes as true of the mind as a whole, is equally true of each mental power, from the simplest of the senses to the most

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complex of the sentiments. If we hold a flower to the nose for long, we become insensible to its scent. We say of a very brilliant flash of lightning that it blinds us; which means that our eyes have for a time lost their ability to appreciate light. After eating a quantity of honey, we are apt to think our tea is without sugar. The phrase "a deafening roar," implies that men find a very loud sound temporarily incapacitates them for hearing faint ones. To a hand which has for some time carried a heavy body, small bodies afterwards lifted seem to have lost their weight. Now, the truth at once recognized in these, its extreme manifestations, may be traced throughout. It may be shown that alike in the reflective faculties, in the imagination, in the perceptions of the beautiful, the ludicrous, the sublime, in the sentiments, the instincts, in all the mental powers, however we may classify them—action exhausts; and that in proportion as the action is violent, the subsequent prostration is great.

Equally, throughout the whole nature, may be traced the law that exercised faculties are ever tending to resume their original state. Not only after continued rest, do they regain their full power—not only do brief cessations partially reinvigorate them; but even while they are in action, the resulting exhaustion is ever being neutralized. The two processes of waste and repair go on together.

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Hence with faculties habitually exercised—as the senses of all persons, or the muscles of any one who is strong—it happens that, during moderate activity, the repair is so nearly equal to the waste, that the diminution of power is scarcely appreciable; and it is only when the activity has been long continued, or has been very violent, that the repair becomes so far in arrear of the waste as to produce a perceptible prostration. In all cases, however, when, by the action of a faculty, waste has been incurred, *some* lapse of time must take place before full efficiency can be reacquired; and this time must be long in proportion as the waste has been great.

Keeping in mind these general truths, we shall be in a condition to understand certain causes of effect in composition now to be considered. Every perception received, and every conception realized, entailing some amount of waste—or, as Liebig would say, some change of matter in the brain; and the efficiency of the faculties subject to this waste being thereby temporarily, tho often but momentarily, diminished; the resulting partial inability must affect the acts of perception and conception that immediately succeed. And hence we may expect that the vividness with which images are realized will, in many cases, depend on the order of their presentation: even when one order is as convenient to the understanding as the other.

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There are sundry facts which alike illustrate this, and are explained by it. Climax is one of them. The marked effect obtained by placing last the most striking of any series of images, and the weakness—often the ludicrous weakness—produced by reversing this arrangement, depends on the general law indicated. As immediately after looking at the sun we can not perceive the light of a fire, while by looking at the fire first and the sun afterwards we can perceive both; so, after receiving a brilliant, or weighty, or terrible thought, we can not appreciate a less brilliant, less weighty, or less terrible one, while, by reversing the order, we can appreciate each. In Antithesis, again, we may recognize the same general truth. The opposition of two thoughts that are the reverse of each other in some prominent trait, insures an impressive effect; and does this by giving a momentary relaxation to the faculties addressed. If, after a series of images of an ordinary character, appealing in a moderate degree to the sentiment of reverence, or approbation, or beauty, the mind has presented to it a very insignificant, a very unworthy, or a very ugly image; the faculty of reverence, or approbation, or beauty, as the case may be, having for the time nothing to do, tends to resume its full power; and will immediately afterwards appreciate a vast, admirable, or beautiful image better than it would otherwise do. Conversely, where the

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idea of absurdity due to extreme insignificance is to be produced, it may be greatly intensified by placing it after something highly impressive: especially if the form of phrase implies that something still more impressive is coming. A good illustration of the effect gained by thus presenting a petty idea to a consciousness that has not yet recovered from the shock of an exciting one, occurs in a sketch by Balzac. His hero writes a mistress who has cooled towards him, the following letter:

"*Madame*—

"Votre conduite m'étonne autant qu'elle m'afflige. Non contente de me déchirer le cœur par vos dédains, vous avez l'indélicatesse de me retenir une brosse à dents, que mes moyens ne me permettent pas de remplacer, mes propriétés étant grevées d'hypothèques.

"Adieu, trop belle et trop ingrate amie! Puissions-nous nous revoir dans un monde meilleur!

"CHARLES-EDOUARD."

Translation.

"*Madame*—

"Your conduct astounds me as much as it grieves me. Not content with breaking my heart with your disdain, you have the indelicacy to retain a tooth-brush that my means do not allow me to replace, my estate being encumbered with mortgages.

"Farewell, very beautiful and most ungrateful friend. May we meet again in a better world.

"CHARLES EDWARD."

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Thus we see that the phenomena of Climax, Antithesis, and Anticlimax, alike result from this general principle. Improbable as these momentary variations in susceptibility may seem, we can not doubt their occurrence when we contemplate the analogous variations in the susceptibility of the senses. Referring once more to phenomena of vision, every one knows that a patch of black on a white ground looks blacker, and a patch of white on a black ground looks whiter, than elsewhere. As the blackness and the whiteness must really be the same, the only assignable cause for this, is a difference in their actions upon us, dependent upon the different states of our faculties. It is simply a visual antithesis.

But this extension of the general principle of economy—this further condition to effective composition, that the sensitiveness of the faculties must be continuously husbanded—includes much more than has been yet hinted. It implies not only that certain arrangements and certain juxtapositions of connected ideas are best; but that some modes of dividing and presenting a subject will be more striking than others; and that, too, irrespective of its logical cohesion. It shows why we must progress from the less interesting to the more interesting; and why not only the composition as a whole, but each of its successive portions, should tend towards a climax. At the same time, it for-

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bids long continuity of the same kind of thought, or repeated production of like effects. It warns us against the error committed both by Pope in his poems and by Bacon in his essays—the error, namely, of constantly employing forcible forms of expression: and it points out that as the easiest posture by and by becomes fatiguing, and is with pleasure exchanged for one less easy; so, the most perfectly-constructed sentences will soon weary, and relief will be given by using those of an inferior kind.

Further, we may infer from it not only that should we avoid generally combining our words in one manner, however good, or working out our figures and illustrations in one way, however telling; but that we should avoid anything like uniform adherence, even to the wider conditions of effect. We should not make every section of our subject progress in interest; we should not always rise to a climax. As we saw that, in single sentences, it is but rarely allowable to fulfil all the conditions to strength; so, in the larger sections of a composition we must not often conform entirely to the law indicated. We must subordinate the component effect to the total effect.

In deciding how practically to carry out the principles of artistic composition, we may derive help by bearing in mind a fact already pointed out—the fitness of certain verbal arrangements for certain kinds of thought. That

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constant variety in the mode of presenting ideas which the theory demands, will in a great degree result from a skilful adaptation of the form to the matter. We saw how the direct or inverted sentence is spontaneously used by excited people; and how their language is also characterized by figures of speech and by extreme brevity. Hence these may with advantage predominate in emotional passages; and may increase as the emotion rises. On the other hand, for complex ideas, the indirect sentence seems the best vehicle. In conversation, the excitement produced by the near approach to a desired conclusion, will often show itself in a series of short, sharp sentences; while, in impressing a view already enunciated, we generally make our periods voluminous by piling thought upon thought. These natural modes of procedure may serve as guides in writing. Keen observation and skilful analysis would, in like manner, detect further peculiarities of expression produced by other attitudes of mind; and by paying due attention to all such traits, a writer possessed of sufficient versatility might make some approach to a completely-organized work.

This species of composition which the law of effect points out as the perfect one, is the one which high genius tends naturally to produce. As we found that the kinds of sentence which are theoretically best, are those generally employed by superior minds, and

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by inferior minds when excitement has raised them; so, we shall find that the ideal form for a poem, essay, or fiction, is that which the ideal writer would evolve spontaneously. One in whom the powers of expression fully responded to the state of feeling, would unconsciously use that variety in the mode of presenting his thoughts, which Art demands. This constant employment of one species of phraseology, which all have now to strive against, implies an undeveloped faculty of language. To have a specific style is to be poor in speech. If we remember that in the far past, men had only nouns and verbs to convey their ideas with, and that from then to now the growth has been towards a greater number of implements of thought, and consequently towards a greater complexity and variety in their combinations; we may infer that we are now, in our use of sentences, much what the primitive man was in his use of words; and that a continuance of the process that has hitherto gone on, must produce increasing heterogeneity in our modes of expression. As now, in a fine nature, the play of the features, the tones of the voice and its cadences, vary in harmony with every thought uttered; so, in one possessed of a fully-developed power of speech, the mold in which each combination of words is cast will similarly vary with, and be appropriate to the sentiment.

That a perfectly endowed man must un-

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consciously write in all styles, we may infer from considering how styles originate. Why is Johnson pompous, Goldsmith simple? Why is one author abrupt, another rhythmical, another concise? Evidently in each case the habitual mode of utterance must depend upon the habitual balance of the nature. The predominant feelings have by use trained the intellect to represent them. But while long, tho unconscious, discipline has made it do this efficiently, it remains, from lack of practise, incapable of doing the same for the less active feelings; and when these are excited, the usual verbal forms undergo but slight modifications. Let the powers of speech be fully developed, however—let the ability of the intellect to utter the emotions be completed, and this fixity of style will disappear. The perfect writer will express himself as Junius, when in the Junius frame of mind; when he feels as Lamb felt, will use a like familiar speech; and will fall into the ruggedness of Carlyle when in a Carlylean mood. Now he will be rhythmical and now irregular; here his language will be plain and there ornate; sometimes his sentences will be balanced and at other times unsymmetrical; for a while there will be considerable sameness, and then again great variety. His mode of expression naturally responding to his state of feeling, there will flow from his pen a composition changing to the same degree that the aspects of his subject change. He will

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thus without effort conform to what we have seen to be the laws of effect. And while his work presents to the reader that variety needful to prevent continuous exertion of the same faculties, it will also answer to the description of all highly-organized products, both of man and of nature: it will be, not a series of like parts simply placed in juxtaposition, but one whole made up of unlike parts that are mutually dependent.

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